

ART. VII.—*John Halton, Bishop of Carlisle, 1292-1324.*  
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THE thirty-two years of John Halton's episcopate at Carlisle were perhaps the most turbulent in the history of the diocese, when the upheaval and destruction caused by the Anglo-Scottish war added to the considerable difficulties of ruling one of the poorest and most remote of English sees. Halton was involved in Anglo-Scottish affairs for much of his episcopate, and it is with this involvement and with his administration of his diocese that this and a further paper will, respectively, be concerned. Both are intended to supplement the extensive introduction which Professor Tout contributed to the Canterbury and York Society's edition of Halton's register, to which frequent reference will be made.<sup>1</sup>

Halton himself, like so many medieval figures, remains shadowy, for the sources which mention him are mostly official and impersonal in character. Of his family and place of origin little is known, though he was probably a northerner. Several namesakes received holy orders from him, and preferment in the diocese.<sup>2</sup> Halton's willingness in 1301 to stand surety, despite his own precarious finances, for William Armstrong of Ousby and Sybil Halton his wife suggests a close connection with this seemingly insignificant couple, and his appointment of Haltons to the benefices of Ousby, Lazonby and Kirkland, situated within a few miles of each other in the east of the diocese, may indicate a family association with that area.

<sup>1</sup> *Reg(istrum Johannis de) Halton*, ed. W. N. Thompson (Canterbury and York Society, 1913). The introduction is reprinted in *The Collected Papers of Thomas Frederick Tout*, vol. 2 (Manchester 1934).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, introduction, i.

Educated at Oxford, Halton entered the Augustinian cathedral priory of Carlisle, of which, according to the Bury St Edmunds chronicler, he later became cellarer.<sup>3</sup> He was elected bishop of Carlisle in April 1292.

The Scottish connections of the diocese of Carlisle date from its very beginning, for the decision of Henry I to establish a Cumbrian see was a response to a border situation in which secular and ecclesiastical problems were interwoven.<sup>4</sup> The seizure and fortification of Carlisle by William II in 1092 had been in flagrant violation of his treaty with the Scots made the year before, and his care not only to establish a garrison there but to introduce peasant settlers from the south indicates his suspicion of the local people and belief in the need for loyal subjects in an area of likely political instability. The failure of Malcolm Canmore's fifth invasion of England in 1093 and the succession to the throne four years later of Edgar, an anglicized member of the Scottish royal family, only postponed a conflict, as no basis for a permanent settlement existed.

Thus, for Henry I the consolidation of his kingdom's northern border was a necessity, of which the organization of the Church under an English bishop was as much a part as the construction of a castle and walls at Carlisle. His political interest is indicated by the limitation of the new diocese to the area liable to Scottish claims. Securely held English territory to the south was left in the archdiocese of York. Thurstan, archbishop of York, struggling against the claim to primacy of Canterbury, favoured the creation of a north-western English see as a means of extending his own sphere of influence and of settling the pro-

<sup>3</sup> *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds*, ed. Antonia Gransden (1964), 113.

<sup>4</sup> For the early history of the diocese, cf. C. M. L. Bouch, *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties* (1948), 2 ff., and J. C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their introduction into England* (1950), 149 ff.

tracted disputes over episcopal jurisdiction in the area.<sup>5</sup> The matter was given added urgency by the activities in Cumberland of Bishop John of Glasgow, who refused for nearly twenty years, despite repeated papal commands, to submit to the metropolitan jurisdiction of York. Thurstan's anxiety to subdue Bishop John and the Scottish Church was no doubt accentuated by his awareness of the ties between the Scottish royal family and his own opponents, the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury.

Yet despite the measures taken by Henry I, the border remained a subject of dispute. The Scottish description in about 1124 of Cumbria as lying between England and Scotland has its counterpart in the fourteenth century chroniclers' references to Carlisle being on the threshold of Scotland and to Edward I's spending time in 1307 at "Carlisle in Scotland".<sup>6</sup> Even after the foundation of the diocese of Carlisle in 1133 some confusion persisted concerning the ecclesiastical boundary, since the limits of the territory belonging to Carlisle and Glasgow seem not to have been precisely fixed, though opportunities for such definition arose, as at the Scottish church council held at Carlisle in 1138. The withdrawal from northern England by the Scots in 1157 fixed the boundary, as E. W. M. Balfour-Melville pointed out,<sup>7</sup> at the political frontier, but Carlisle might be vulnerable to encroachment by Glasgow if the Scots should regain political control of the region. The revival by John de Cheam, bishop of Glasgow from 1259 to 1268, of the claim, based on centuries of tradition, to territory as far south as the Rere Cross of Stainmore was in effect a claim for the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Geoffrey Hill, *English Dioceses* (1900), 285-290, and Donald Nicholl, *Thurstan, Archbishop of York* (1964), 78-84, 140-150.

<sup>6</sup> A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta* (2nd ed., 1955), 265. *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard, vol. 3 (Rolls Series, 1890), 137, 327.

<sup>7</sup> E. W. M. Balfour-Melville, *John de Cheam, Bishop of Glasgow*, in [Scot]tish Hist[orical] R[evue], vol. 27 (1948), 182-184.

ecclesiastical boundary to revert to the political frontier most favourable to the Scots.

The bishop of Carlisle, therefore, had a particular interest in the maintenance of the English position in the border counties and was a convenient agent for the English king in his dealings with the Scots. At Carlisle, as elsewhere, there was by Halton's time something of a tradition of service to the Crown in various fields. Bishop Walter Mauclerc had been Henry III's treasurer, and Halton's immediate predecessor, Ralph Irton, had been one of the negotiators of the treaty of Birgham of 18 July 1290, by which Edward of Caernarvon was to have married Margaret of Norway. When early in 1291 the council of magnates of Scotland, faced with a disputed succession, submitted the case to Edward I "that in so great a doubt they might enjoy his counsel", Irton was one of the envoys sent "exhorting them gently and persuasively to submit to his ordinance".<sup>8</sup>

Halton, confirmed in his see by Edward I only six months before judgement was given in the Great Cause, could hardly avoid involvement in Scottish affairs. Although he does not appear among the Englishmen appointed by Edward to Scottish offices at this time, a royal protection was issued on 15 October 1292 for John bishop of Carlisle, staying in Scotland, "for as long as he is on the king's service".<sup>9</sup> The bishop of Carlisle is one of ten prelates mentioned in the *Annales Regni Scotiae* as present in Berwick Castle when judgement was given for John Balliol,<sup>10</sup> and he remained in Edward I's entourage for some time afterwards. Possibly the little-known Austin canon was retained so that his ability might be assessed. Certainly

<sup>8</sup> *Walter of Guisborough, Chronicle*, ed. H. Rothwell (Camden Society, third series, vol. 89, 1957), 233.

<sup>9</sup> *C[alender of] Pat[ent] R[olls]*, 1281-1292 (Record Commission, 1895), 508.

<sup>10</sup> *Anglo-Scottish Relations: Selected Documents, 1174-1328*, ed. E. L. G. Stones (1965), 59.

he was at Newcastle to witness Balliol's homage on 26 December, when John of Dublin was the only other bishop named as present,<sup>11</sup> and the earliest reference to his presence in his diocese after that date is a letter from his manor of Rose Castle at the end of March 1293.<sup>12</sup>

These early Scottish contacts perhaps provided Halton with the opportunity of acquaintance with John Balliol, who greeted the bishop in a note of presentation to a Carlisle benefice in May 1294 as 'his most trusted friend'.<sup>13</sup> They certainly aroused in Halton a continuing interest in Scottish affairs, as is attested by several entries in his register such as the text of Balliol's treaty with Philip IV of France in October 1295, and his *diffidatio* delivered at Berwick in April 1296, with its complaints of Scottish towns occupied, goods stolen, merchants killed and royal servants imprisoned, all with the connivance of Edward I.<sup>14</sup>

Journeys to Scotland in his capacity as collector of Pope Nicholas' tenth, for example those of July-August 1294, when Halton stayed a fortnight at Kelso, and July 1295, when he was at Jedburgh for ten days, gave opportunities for informal contacts with influential Scots, and Halton must have been on the watch for indications of the political atmosphere from the ecclesiastics with whom his business lay. The abbots of Kelso and Jedburgh were notably antagonistic to the English, and the latter was later active in Franco-Scottish diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> It is unfortunate that no evidence remains of Halton's view of the deteriorating relationship between the Scottish and English kings and of Edward I's determination to assert his overlordship,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>12</sup> *Reg. Halton*, II, 236.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 78, 68.

<sup>15</sup> G. W. S. Barrow, *The Scots Clergy in the war of independence*, in *Scot. Hist. R.*, vol. 41 (1962), 18.

since he was well informed about Scottish affairs and well placed to follow developments.

Halton's main personal connection with Scotland was his office, already mentioned, as collector of the crusading tenth levied in 1291 by Pope Nicholas IV.<sup>16</sup> This he inherited from his predecessor Bishop Irton, to whom the papal bull of appointment was addressed in March 1292, and he relinquished office in March 1301. The task was a difficult one. Baiamondo de' Vici's collection of the tenth of 1274 was still taking him back to Scotland in 1289,<sup>17</sup> and the three successive tenths of 1254, 1274 and 1291 became increasingly unpopular and difficult to collect as the assessment more nearly approached the true value of the property concerned. Halton's valuation rolls were described in 1301 as a true and complete valuation,<sup>18</sup> and they more than doubled the assessment of the Scottish Church in the taxation of 1256.

The collector's task was made difficult by the lack of effective sanctions at his disposal and made virtually impossible from 1296 by the war. To overcome reluctance to contribute to the tenth, Halton might rely on the assistance of Scottish prelates, but all too often this led to an absurd situation in which they were ordered simultaneously to compel their subjects to pay and threatened with suspension on account of their own arrears.<sup>19</sup> The studied politeness of Halton's letter to the bishop of St Andrews over his failure to pay, and the admission of his proxy at the accounting of March 1301 that the taxation of the goods of the bishops of St Andrews and Glasgow had been carried

<sup>16</sup> *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Papal Letters*, vol. 1, 1198-1304, ed. W. H. Bliss (1893), 554. Tout's introduction to the Register has a long section dealing with the papal taxation of Scotland, pp. vii-xxviii.

<sup>17</sup> *C. Pat. R.*, 1281-1292, 321.

<sup>18</sup> *Reg. Halton*, I, 152. Tout believes Baiamondo's valuation, and Halton's, excessively high. *Reg. Halton*, I, xv-xvi.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 21, 45.

out "according to the consciences of the said bishops, and, as it is believed, less than fully" are two indications of the collector's lack of power.<sup>20</sup> His subcollectors were often Scottish monks, and it was unrealistic for Halton to expect them to proceed "sparing no dignity nor person" to discipline powerful churchmen against whose displeasure he was in no position to protect them.<sup>21</sup> Alternatively, he might appoint as subcollectors English clerics who incurred the odium of being representatives not only of an extortionate papacy but of a hostile nation. In 1301, for example, three collectors of obventions were mentioned, of whom William de Goseford was a priest of the Carlisle diocese and rector of Ormside, William de Irby was a Cumberland man and John de Berwis also belonged to Carlisle.<sup>22</sup> All, that is, were Cumbrians sent north simply to collect money.

Despite the difficulties, however, Halton approached his task methodically, fixing dates well in advance for the payment of accounts by subcollectors, and although the registered records make clear that receipts were incomplete and often long in arrears his achievement was considerable. In 1301 his procurator, William de Rodington, surrendered six rescripts of Nicholas IV concerning the tenth and eighteen rolls containing the valuation of the Scottish Church.<sup>23</sup> He was able to show that of the £15,847. 4s. 10d. for which Halton accepted liability, £11,896. 10s. 8d. had been accounted for to the principal papal agents, the Pulici and Rembertini, and £1,666. os. 5¼d. to the Spini. Anglo-Scottish hostilities supervened, and it is difficult to know certainly how much Edward I, the intended beneficiary, finally derived from the tenth. Halton's satisfactory performance of his duties, however, is

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 20, 156.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 43.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 156.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 150-161.

indicated by his reappointment as subcollector for Scotland of the 1305 tenth levied by Clement V, in circumstances even more turbulent than before.

Halton's major commission in the royal service was the custody of Carlisle castle, which he received in October 1297 "with the king's demesne and other appurtenances to keep at his own risk at the usual yearly rent".<sup>24</sup> In this office he succeeded Robert Bruce of Annandale, father of Robert I. As Mr Kirby has shown, the custody of the castle and demesne had for many years prior to Bruce's appointment been entrusted to the sheriff, who latterly paid £55. 2s. 11d. for it yearly.<sup>25</sup> He was dependent on the product of the demesne, and thus on peaceful conditions, to realize a profit for himself. Such conditions did not obtain during Halton's tenure.

It may be that some reports of the Scottish raids in 1296 and 1297 are exaggerated. The Bury St Edmunds chronicler, for example, who told of 120 townships in Northumberland and Cumberland destroyed in 1296 was far from the scene of his story, and apparently had his doubts about the account of 715 towns and villages destroyed in 1297, since he prefaced it with a non-committal, "They say that. . ."<sup>26</sup> Yet military activity on the frontier had clearly been on a scale to attract widespread attention,<sup>27</sup> and so the profitability of the constable's office had been reduced before Halton took over. Moreover, its separation from the office of sheriff meant that any deficit could not be made good from other county revenues.

War damage to the constable's receipts was caused not only by Scottish attack but also by demands for

<sup>24</sup> C. *Fine R.*, 1272-1307 (Record Commission, 1911), 392.

<sup>25</sup> J. L. Kirby, *The Keeping of Carlisle Castle before 1381*, CW2 liv, 131-139.

<sup>26</sup> *Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds*, ed. cit., 131, 142.

<sup>27</sup> Walter of Guisborough gives a more circumstantial account of the attack by Comyn on Carlisle, ed. cit., 272-274.



provision from Edward I's own forces. In February 1301 the Crown commanded an exchequer inquiry into a petition by Halton that although he held the herbage and meadow of the demesne at Carlisle for £10 a year "the meadows and herbages were wholly eaten up and consumed in one year by Welshmen and Irishmen going to Scotland in the king's service and by his subjects in his army going to Scotland and returning thence in two other years that he was unable to receive any advantage thence during that time".<sup>28</sup> Since Halton elsewhere valued the herbage and meadows at £17 yearly, there was in peacetime the possibility of a substantial profit for the holder of the farm.<sup>29</sup> Yet the problem of depasturing was, in spite of the Crown's willingness to make just allowance, a continuing one for which there was no easy solution, as is indicated by a royal order in December 1301 for inquiry into further losses sustained by Halton in the year ended the previous month.<sup>30</sup>

The submission of a claim was only the first step towards the recovery of the constable's losses, which might be a lengthy process. Thus, when in May 1304 a royal order acquitted Halton of a total of £72. 18s. 10d. from his farm of Carlisle castle, this was in respect of damage suffered throughout his tenure, including the burning by the Scots of certain dwellings belonging to the castle in 1297.<sup>31</sup> Payment of a balance of £26. 8s. 6d. which it was calculated that Edward I owed the bishop was not ordered until January 1305.<sup>32</sup> Until his acquittance in 1304, therefore, Halton was liable to have demanded of him substantial sums which he would have had difficulty in producing. The delay in securing the acquittance above is insignificant

<sup>28</sup> *C. Close R., 1296-1302* (Record Commission, 1906), 420.

<sup>29</sup> *C. Pat. R., 1301-1307* (Record Commission, 1898), 272.

<sup>30</sup> *C. Close R., 1296-1302*, 508.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1302-1307 (Record Commission, 1908), 142.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

beside that of over twenty years after which Halton was in 1320 allowed 50 marks, paid to Henry Percy by order of Edward I for the expenses of his men defending Carlisle.<sup>33</sup>

Even if prompt attention by royal officials to claims for allowances could be guaranteed, the constable still needed readily available resources to initiate any necessary works. His ability always to provide these resources is doubtful, since his assets were reduced not only by enemy activity but also by being commandeered for the war effort. It was not, for example, until October 1315 that Edward II ordered an allowance of £169. 19s. 3d. to be made to Halton for 51 sacks and ten stone of wool belonging to him and taken for the late king's use.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Halton was still obliged to fulfil his personal responsibility, for example for the provision of troops, as well as carrying out the constable's office.<sup>35</sup>

Financially, therefore, tenure of the office of constable was at this time extremely perilous, and Halton's several years as constable did nothing to alleviate his financial difficulties. The reunion of the offices of sheriff and constable which took place after Halton's tenure testifies to the difficulty of making the constableness self-supporting, and the bishop must have had misgivings when appointed to superior custody of the castle and city of Carlisle on 6 April 1314.<sup>36</sup> The letters relating to this appointment envisage co-operation between Halton and the sheriff, Andrew de Harcla, but by 1 July Harcla was again in sole charge.<sup>37</sup>

The responsibility which Halton discharged as constable included the defence and repair of the castle

<sup>33</sup> *C. Close R.*, 1318-1323 (Record Commission, 1895), 193.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1313-1318 (Record Commission, 1893), 252.

<sup>35</sup> Cf., for example, the royal order in *Reg. Halton*, I, 117.

<sup>36</sup> *C. Pat. R.*, 1307-1313 (Record Commission, 1892), 103.

<sup>37</sup> *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, ed. J. Bain (vol. 3, 1887), 72. Harcla claimed that his resources were insufficient to pay his troops.

and its provisioning. For the last, an extensive network existed under central supervision, and there is evidence in Halton's register of the systematic attempt made at this time to exploit the resources of the lordship of Ireland for the Scottish war. In January and February 1298 Halton received notice from the agents of Wogan and Eastden, Edward I's Irish justiciar and treasurer, of large quantities of grain and malt sent over in the ships 'Mariote', 'Holy Cross' and 'Gabriel' of Drogheda for the provisioning of Carlisle.<sup>38</sup> He did not receive such supplies directly but through the royal victualler in Carlisle, Richard de Abingdon, called the agent of John de Drokenesford, keeper of the wardrobe.<sup>39</sup>

Besides the receipt of supplies, there was occasionally distribution to be carried out, such as that of military equipment to Lochmaben castle.<sup>40</sup> Carlisle was a convenient supply centre for outposts like Lochmaben, themselves in danger of Scots attack. The constable was also called upon to issue money for troop payments, both to the garrison and to less regular forces. It was when military activity was most intense that such demands were greatest, although this was the time when he was least able to meet them.<sup>41</sup> On one occasion Halton had to borrow heavily from a clerical fifth granted to Edward I in order to make an immediate payment to a detachment of Percy's troops, who would otherwise have marched south and left Carlisle defenceless. He later had to petition a parliament of Edward II to gain remission of this sum.<sup>42</sup>

It was to the constable that the care of Scottish prisoners in Carlisle fell, including the provision of food, lodging and servants, and this involved him in considerable expense, since as persons of some rank

<sup>38</sup> *Reg. Halton*, I, 110-111.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 166, 182.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 178 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Bain, *op. cit.* (vol. 2, 1884), 245.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 3), 119.

they had to be decently maintained. Though hostages and prisoners might be a source of profit to their captors, there is no indication that Halton derived financial advantage from those in his charge, on whom he spent no less than £150. 18s. od. in his first three years of office.<sup>43</sup> Orders like that which Halton received to hand over Ivo de Closeburn of Galloway to Robert de Clifford, to whom the king had granted him, suggest that others were making a profit, but the only communication about prisoners traced by the writer as received by Halton, save allowance for their keep, was a letter obliging him to answer "body for body" for four Scottish prisoners.<sup>44</sup>

There is little evidence for personal co-operation between the bishop and Robert de Clifford, the professional soldier and Westmorland magnate whom Edward I had appointed warden of the March within a few days of giving Halton the custody of Carlisle castle, and with whom the responsibility for border defence primarily lay.<sup>45</sup> The absence of Clifford on expeditions such as those into Annandale in 1297 and 1298 will have thrown additional responsibility on the constable, who stated years later that he had been in sole charge of Carlisle late in 1297.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the front-line position on the border of Carlisle and the large sums mentioned as passing through the constable's hands, the castle was neither large nor heavily garrisoned. Walter of Guisborough singles out in his account of Comyn's siege in 1296 the resistance of the townswomen who hurled down rocks and boiling water on the besiegers, which may suggest a lack of adequate troops and a somewhat improvised defence, while Halton's wage accounts

<sup>43</sup> *Reg. Halton*, I, 180 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Bain, *op. cit.* (vol. 2), 281, 449.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. R. R. Reid, *The Office of Warden of the Marches*, in E[nglish] H[istorical] R[evue], vol. 32 (1917).

<sup>46</sup> Bain, *op. cit.* (vol. 3), 119.

disclose that during the attack in strength by William Wallace at the end of 1297 there was a garrison of fourteen cross-bowmen and ninety-five soldiers.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the responsibilities in which Halton's tenure of the constablership involved him resulted, as has been seen, in heavy burdens.

The Scottish war of independence was to make the border country a prey to raids by the Scots and to aggravate greatly the difficulties of a northern diocese with little money and poor communications.<sup>48</sup> So notorious was the region among southerners even in peacetime that in 1262 a justice in eyre petitioned the chancellor to excuse him visiting it because it was so far away and because its bad climate would ruin his health. He much preferred to visit the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon.<sup>49</sup> Early in 1307, however, with Bruce in exile, the Scots can have appeared to stand little chance against the superior English military strength and commissariat. It was with surprise that the Lanercost chronicler reported that "notwithstanding the terrible vengeance inflicted on the Scots who adhered to the party of the aforesaid Robert Bruce, the number of those wishing to establish him in the realm increased day by day".<sup>50</sup> The hopelessness of fighting an orthodox campaign against such odds was the reason for the devastation of northern England, for the best hope for the Scots lay in guerrilla warfare.

The accession of Edward II clearly lifted Scottish morale, and the rumour was already current in the summer of 1308 that the king desired a peace with

<sup>47</sup> *Guisborough, Chronicle*, 273. The attention of many of the defenders was distracted by the fire-raising of a Scottish spy. *Reg. Halton*, I, 178 ff.

<sup>48</sup> On this whole subject cf. G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (1965); J. Scammell, *Robert I and the north of England*, in *E.H.R.*, vol. 73 (1958).

<sup>49</sup> *Royal and other Historical Letters, Henry III*, II (Rolls Series, 1866), 22. Cited by J. Wilson, *Medieval Education at Carlisle*, *Scot. Hist. R.*, vol. 11 (1914), 40.

<sup>50</sup> *Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272-1346*, tr. H. Maxwell (1913), 182.

Bruce which would allow him to consolidate his own position against the English magnates.<sup>51</sup> In later years, the preoccupation of Edward and the Ordainers with their internal struggle left the defence of the north so gravely impaired that many were persuaded that their best interest lay in private negotiation with the Scots. Halton was one of these, and on 19 April 1314 an agreement was drawn up between him and Edward Bruce by which the episcopal manors of Rose Castle and Linstock would be spared in return for the delivery to Bruce of two Scottish brothers, of the Lindsay family, held prisoner in England.<sup>52</sup> The bishop was to find two sureties for his performance of this undertaking and, failing the release of the Lindsays, Bruce was to be free "to attack us and our lands at his will". At the time Bruce was using Rose Castle, where the agreement was drafted, as a base from which to send out raiding parties against the surrounding area, so the bishop had a vivid illustration to hand of how the Scots treated defaulters.

It seems that Halton's intercession was not influential enough to secure the release of the prisoners in question, who were among a group exchanged in the following November for John de Segrave, taken prisoner by the Scots at Bothwell castle after Bannockburn.<sup>53</sup> By this time, however, Halton had fled south to his Lincolnshire manor of Horncastle, and his absence from his diocese for fear of the Scots for at least two years from July 1314 was for him the most serious personal consequence of the war, since it left him with only that control of diocesan affairs which could be exercised by letters from the south to his vicar-general.

For the greater part of his episcopate, the extent of Halton's involvement in English political affairs was governed by the border situation. He was liable, for

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>52</sup> *Reg. Halton*, II, 96.

<sup>53</sup> *Bain, op. cit.* (vol. 3), 76.

example, to be summoned to parliament, but the disturbed state of his diocese made his absence inadvisable. Although Tout deduces from charter evidence that Halton spent time at the royal court between 1307 and 1309,<sup>54</sup> there is from March 1309 a series of letters in which Halton excused himself from attending various parliaments on the ground, among others, of Scottish invasion.<sup>55</sup> Yet Halton, by that time a man of considerable experience in border affairs, was one of the committee of bishops, earls and barons named in 1318 to counsel, or control, Edward II<sup>56</sup> and his influence and persuasion are perhaps to be seen in the meeting at Sherburn in 1321, when the clergy concentrated, in their reply to John de Bek's articles of complaint, on the problem of defence against the Scots. Halton, concerned for thirty years with Scotland, is more likely to have directed the clergy's attention in this direction than either Melton or Beaumont, both more recent appointees to northern sees.

Halton's long familiarity with border affairs, and perhaps his personal contact with Bruce many years before, seemingly weighed more with Edward II than his old age and infirmity, since he became heavily engaged near the end of his life in negotiation with the Scots. The decision to negotiate was influenced by the continuing success of Bruce, the increasing reluctance of the English to fight an enemy their own king connived to buy off, and Edward's increasing political difficulties. The appointment of envoys in September 1320 and the start of negotiations early in 1321 coincided with the estrangement between Edward II and the Welsh marcher lords on account of their opposition to the growing Welsh interest of the Despencers.<sup>57</sup>

A commission was issued in September 1320 to four

<sup>54</sup> *Reg. Halton*, I, introduction, xxix, n.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 314; II, 74, 231 ff.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, I, introduction, xxvi; *C. Close R.*, 1318-1323, 112.

<sup>57</sup> May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century* (1959), 58-61.

envoys, including Halton, to treat of peace with the Scots, and contact was established, for the latter were given safe-conducts in November to go to Newcastle.<sup>58</sup> The issue of safe-conducts suggests some Scottish willingness to negotiate, but the course of events thereafter is less clear. On 19 January 1321 Halton was one of thirteen members of an embassy named to negotiate with the Scots and given full power to conclude a treaty in the king's name, but this entry in the Patent Rolls has a note subjoined that all letters about the peace had been cancelled because not used.<sup>59</sup> A writ dated 23 February exists, however, substituting the earl of Richmond for Pembroke and Hereford, so the embassy was active about the king's business at this date.<sup>60</sup>

Correspondence published by Professor Stones shows that the embassy was active until April 1321 and that Halton was concerned in it for part of that time.<sup>61</sup> Edward II certainly needed peace, and a succession of letters to his envoys in February and March 1321, as well as his anxiety that Richmond be present before any decisive negotiations took place, indicate serious intentions on his part. Yet the English government was alive to the possible propaganda value of a venture whose success in other respects was doubtful, as is seen from the instructions to the envoys that the Scots be kept talking until French and papal representatives should arrive, and that then the king's right over the realm of Scotland be fully expounded. Such delays would be particularly galling to Halton, whose losses from the war had been great, and Edward's assurances in a letter of 1 March that he was deeply grateful for the envoys' diligence may be a response to signs of impatience from within the commission.

<sup>58</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1317-1321* (Record Commission, 1903), 504, 528.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 554.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>61</sup> Stones, *op. cit.*, 146-152.



The delays, and Scottish reluctance to discuss anything more than a long truce, are likely to have contributed, with ill-health, to Halton's early return to his diocese. While on the embassy he had to devote some time to diocesan business, and by 18 April he was back at Linstock ordaining clergy.<sup>62</sup> Possibly this early return incurred a measure of disfavour and, added to the king's shortage of money, accounts for the rejection of his petition for his expenses on the embassy, on the ground that since he went for the common good of the king, the realm and his own bishopric, and did not go far out of the latter, he must bear his own expenses.<sup>63</sup> This was an ungenerous end to so long and varied a record of service to the Crown, pursued loyally despite its encroachment on Halton's primary responsibility, the administration and pastoral care of his diocese.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Reg. Halton*, II, 205-206.

<sup>63</sup> Bain, *op. cit.* (vol. 3), 139.

<sup>64</sup> I thank Miss Margaret Archer for much helpful advice on an earlier version of this paper, and Professor E. L. G. Stones for reading and commenting on it.