



Marco Antonio De Dominis,

ARCHBISHOP OF SPALATRO.

IDARE say some of your readers may have seen that the above foreign prelate was quoted, as an authority in favour of the Metropolitan Jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury over his Suffragans, by Archbishop Benson, in his recent Judgment against Bishop King, of Lincoln. See *Guardian*, May 15, 1889:—

“The great specific learning and ecclesiastical science of Antonio De Dominis, Archbishop of Spalatro, and Dean of Windsor, even if his numerous proofs all may not be equally valid, cannot be lightly set aside. His conclusion, after elaborate research and argument, is that the Metropolitan ‘ordinarium jam habere in episcopos suæ provinciæ potestatem,’ or otherwise that he is ‘ordinarius admonitor, corrector, et iudex adversus suorum suffraganeorum vel negligentiam vel excessus.’”

And no doubt many of those who read the above passage were inclined to wonder how an Archbishop of Spalatro became Dean of Windsor, and asked themselves—where is Spalatro, when did De Dominis live; and how comes he to be quoted by Archbishop Benson as an authority on Ecclesiastical Law? Perhaps, too, the readers of these pages will avail themselves anew of Sir Walter Scott’s puzzling quotation, *Quid hoc ad Iphicli boves?* What has all this to do with the Berks Archæological Society’s QUARTERLY JOURNAL? I will try to shew the connection in the following brief account which I have condensed from Jeremy Collier’s “Ecclesiastical History,” Perry’s “History of the Church of England,” and the “Dictionary of Biography” (vol. xv., edited by Leslie Stephen).

Marco Antonio De Dominis was born in the small island of Arbe, off the coast of Croatia, in the year 1566. He was educated

by the Jesuits, and at first was deeply imbued with the principles of their system. But, as he became more thoroughly acquainted with ecclesiastical antiquity, he discovered the many innovations in the doctrine and worship of the Church of Rome; and in particular the rigid way, in which prohibited books were kept even from priests and bishops, led De Dominis to have doubts as to the orthodoxy of that Church. The Fathers of the Order of Jesuits, who were proud of his mathematical attainments, obtained for him the Professorship of Mathematics at Padua, and of Logic and Rhetoric at Brescia. But, upon his ordination, De Dominis became a popular preacher, and after awhile he was advanced to be Bishop of Segni, in the State of Venice, much to the annoyance of the Jesuits, who wished to keep him in their Order. After no long time, he was advanced to the Archbishopric of Spalatro, in Dalmatia, and he thus became of necessity involved in the great controversy between the Republic of Venice and the See of Rome; and he appears to have taken a leading part in it. For this reason, when, through the mediation of Henry IV. of France, Venice and the Pope were reconciled, his Holiness appointed a yearly pension of five hundred crowns, to be paid out of the revenues of the See of Spalatro, to the Bishop of Segni. The Archbishop highly resented this, and applied to Sir D. Carlton, the English Ambassador at Venice, to know whether he would be received into the Church of England. At Venice he had already been intimate with Sir Henry Wotton and William Bedell, his learned chaplain, and was thus well acquainted with the doctrines and constitution of the Church of England. He observed, he said, many abuses and corruptions in the Church of Rome, and he desired, above all things, to live in a Reformed Church, and had an especial affection for the Church of England.

Accordingly, the Ambassador acquainted King James I., who, flattering himself that the quarrel of Venice had been the effect of his own book on the Oath of Allegiance, mightily approved of the Archbishop's proposal to come to England, and expressed a desire to receive him. On his arrival, in 1616, he had a very honourable reception, both in the Universities and at Court. The King recommended him as a guest to Archbishop Abbot; and all the English Bishops agreed to contribute towards his maintenance. Soon after his arrival in England, De Dominis preached a sermon in Italian (afterwards printed), in which he inveighed with great vehemence against the abuses of the Romish Church. He was regarded by all as a convert to Anglicanism; and even took part at Lambeth

Chapel in the consecration of some English Bishops. The writers of that period (Fuller, Wilson, Hacket, Goodman, Crakanthorp, &c.) are full of details as to the Archbishop. "It is incredible," says Fuller, "what flocking of people there was to behold this old archbishop now a new convert; prelates and peers presented him with gifts of high valuation." He was a man "old and corpulent," says Wilson, but of a "comely presence." He appears to have been irascible and pretentious, gifted with an unlimited assurance and plenty of ready talent in writing and speaking; of a "jeering temper," and of a most grasping avarice. Thomas Middleton, the dramatist, ridiculed him, under the title of the "Fat Bishop," in his well-known play, *The Game of Chesse*, in 1624. "He was well named De Dominis in the plural," says Crakanthorp, "for he could serve two masters, or twenty, if they paid him wages."

He soon began to petition the King for preferment; and, in 1617, James conferred upon him the Mastership of the Savoy and the Deanery of Windsor. As Dean of Windsor, he presently bestowed upon himself the rich Rectory of West Ilsley, in Berkshire, having made a shift to read the Thirty-nine Articles in English, for his induction.* He soon gave proof of his avaricious disposition by endeavouring to find flaws in the leases granted by his predecessors at the Savoy, that he might levy fresh fines upon the unfortunate tenants. In this design, however, he was checked by Dr. King, Bishop of London, who severely rebuked him for his covetousness.

De Dominis now applied himself to perfect and publish his books, and in 1617 brought out three large folios—"De Republicâ Ecclesiasticâ"—of which the original still exists among the Tanner M.SS. in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford. "He exclaims," says Fuller, "'in reading, meditation, and writing, I am almost pined away,' but his fat cheeks did confute his false tongue in that expression." In 1619 he published Father Paul's famous "History of the Council of Trent."

On coming to England, De Dominis at first lived in constant dread of the Inquisition; but, being now grown confident, he ventured to indulge his jeering temper at the expense of Count

* It may be as well to correct here two small errors in Cooper King's "Popular History of Berkshire" (p. 246), where the author calls West Ilsley a Vicarage, and says it was given to De Dominis by King James. West Ilsley is still, and always has been, a *Rectory* in the patronage of the *Dean and Chapter of Windsor*.

Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador. Gondomar took deadly offence, and immediately proceeded to compass the ruin of the Archbishop; for, having great influence at Rome, he was easily able to induce the Pope to send the most flattering offers to the Archbishop, if he would return to his former faith. Just at this period also (1620) Paul V. died, and was succeeded by Gregory XV., who was a relative and fellow-countryman of De Dominis. The greedy old man at once swallowed the bait. He was probably by this time tired of England, and seems to have found the climate unsuited to his Italian blood. He was discontented with the amount of revenues which he had in England—"non multum supra quadringentas libras annuas"—whereas Pope Gregory offered him "*duodecim millia Coronatorum*," i.e., says Crakanthorp, "*juxta calculum tuum Octuplicis stipendii summam, si ad hanc nostram conferatur*." Accordingly, De Dominis was instantly smitten with a desire to visit his native land and of seeing once more his "friends and relations, nephews and nieces." Having made up his mind to quit England, he wrote to King James (16 Jan., 1622), telling him of the invitation he had received from Pope Gregory and requesting his leave to depart. James was indignant, as he well might be, at the barefaced hypocrisy of the pretended convert, and very much angered that one who had professed such violent antagonism to the Church of Rome should suddenly and without reason desire to return thither. He sent the Bishops of London and Durham and the Dean of Winchester to question the Archbishop, and find out his real views and intentions. The result of this inquiry was that De Dominis was ordered to quit the country within twenty days. Just at this moment Toby Matthews, the aged Archbishop of York, set forth one of his accustomed hoaxes as to his own death. De Dominis had the inconceivable assurance to ask for that preferment, and upon its refusal made haste to depart. It was well known that he had been hoarding up a large sum of money, and King James determined to seize upon this. But the crafty old prelate had lodged his trunks with an ambassador, who was just about to leave the kingdom, and they could not be touched. He himself went to Brussels, where he was to wait for the Pope's formal permission and safe-conduct to go to Rome. Meanwhile his trunks were actually seized at Gravesend, and were found to contain between £1,600 and £1,700, which he had scraped together in England. But he wrote a piteous letter to King James, and the trunks were restored to him. While waiting at Brussels, De Dominis wrote

another very remarkable tract, entitled "Consilium Reditûs," which is a complete retraction of his former treatise, "Consilium Profec-tionis," in which he had put forth his reasons for leaving the Church of Rome. In this latter tract he poured scorn on the English Reformation, treats the English Communion with very rough language, and calls his coming hither a senseless unhappy voyage, and says that it was inconsistency, weakness, and passionate disgust which brought him to that fancy.

At Brussels he stayed six months, expecting the fulfilment of Gregory's promise—a cardinal's red hat and a rich bishopric. But neither came to him; nor even a safe conduct to go to Rome. The Papal Brief was refused; but De Dominis thought that he had made ample amends by his unmeasured laudation of Rome, and his grovelling abuse of himself, in his "Consilium Reditûs." He was soon destined to find that Rome never forgives. For a short time he lived upon a pension from Gregory, but upon Gregory's death it was discontinued by his successor, Pope Urban VIII. It is said that this disappointment made De Dominis venture upon some dangerous freedoms and talk pretended heresy. In particular one night at supper with Cardinal Clesel, an old acquaintance, he happened to let fall this expression, "That no Catholic had answered his books, *De Republicâ Ecclesiasticâ*," adding, however, that "he himself was able to deal with them." He was immediately seized by the Inquisition, and immured in the Castle of St. Angelo. He was now an old man, and his health was shattered, and he soon succumbed to his privations, and died some months after his first confinement, not without suspicion of foul play.

However this may be, the dead Archbishop was subjected to the Forms of the Inquisition. A Conclave of Cardinals sat to consider his case. His study had been searched, and several papers found in it amounting to heresy on the doctrine of the Trinity. He was judged to have been a relapsed heretic, and was handed over to the secular arm. After this sentence, his body and his books were publicly burned by the executioner in the Field of Flora at Rome.

The character of him, given by Dr. Fitzgerald, Rector of the English College at Rome, to Sir Edward Sackville, seems not an unjust one: "He was a malcontent knave when he fled from us, a railing knave while he lived with you, and a motley parti-coloured knave now he is come again." His learning and his skill in contro-versy were as famous as they were undoubted; but as to his

honesty, all his contemporaries, both Anglican and Roman, seem to be agreed that he had none.

He can scarcely be enrolled amongst the "Worthies" of Berks ; but it would be interesting to know whether at Windsor or at West Ilsley he has left behind him any trace of his incumbencies.

C. W. PENNY.

Wellington College.

