

Italian cities. She spoke of the discoveries made in them owing to recent excavations, and showed many beautiful sketches she had taken, photographs and paintings.

On March 6th, a meeting took place in Hannington Hall, when Miss Martin gave another of her most interesting lectures. She spoke of 'The Egypt of Moses and Joseph,' and showed some strikingly beautiful slides of the persons and places of which she spoke. Mrs. Macintosh most kindly received the large party of members and friends at tea afterwards.

On May 12th, the Rev. Prof. Sayce gave another of his fascinating lectures. On this occasion he spoke of recent excavations in Rome and Pompeii. This was specially interesting after Miss Ward's paper on her visits to Rome and other Italian cities and her account of the recent discoveries made in them.

The Benedictine Priory of Broomhall, Berks.

By FREDERIC TURNER.

(Continued from Vol. 27, No. I, p. 95.)

MORE than forty years after the suppression the College suffered from a similar act of folly on the part of the nuns. Land in Egham had been granted for a long term at inadequate rents, and when in 1568 the College granted a new lease, the tenants, who were descendants of the original lessees, claimed the freehold, and apparently with success, for the College does not appear as owner afterwards. A lease dated 1511 was apparently never executed, or if so the seal has been cut away; in any case the land it purports to let was lost to the College. The rental set out in the Terrier of 1489 was 21/4d., and the land was to be leased for two hundred years at 22/-! No doubt the consideration which induced the nuns to grant these absurd leases was a sum of money paid down where-with to tide over the wants and necessities of the moment.

The writer in the 'Victoria County History, Berks,' remarks that 'It seems impossible to ascertain the exact facts that led to the suppression of this small nunnery,' but the muniments

of St. John's make the course of events very clear. The story is one of special interest and importance, throwing as it does, much light on the methods pursued by the king and his advisers in paving the way for the wholesale confiscations of some fifteen years later.

The suppression or transfer took place in 1521, and at that time the king and Wolsey were anxious to get some mild and inoffensive precedents wherewith to justify bolder action. Only two years before, Fox, Bishop of Winchester, was seeking with difficulty for landed estate wherewith to endow his college of Corpus Christi, Oxon. By some chance he came across the manor of Milton, in Egham, belonging to Chertsey Abbey. The holders, the Middletons, had been in possession from the thirteenth century at least; but the Middleton of the sixteenth century was a broken, needy man, hiding from his creditors in London. To eject him was a long and tedious process which apparently the monastery did not care to undertake, and even if successful they would only gain a dilapidated house and an impoverished estate. Henry VIII lent a ready ear to Fox's proposition that he should be allowed to acquire the manor, and the monastery seems to have raised no objection. After a series of Chancery suits the bishop obtained possession, and all the consideration the monks received was a promise of a payment of 50/- or £3 on the appointment of every new head to the college. The event passed unnoticed, and a valuable precedent was created.

About the same time Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, found himself in much the same position as Fox. He experienced great difficulty in carrying out the will of the Duchess of Richmond, foundress of St. John's. Now there was in his own diocese a decayed nunnery at Higham in Kent. It bore an indifferent character, and was almost deserted. How his attention was called to Broomhall is not known. Here again was a house in an advanced stage of decay and poverty, although of good character. Even to a man of Fisher's tender conscience there seemed no wrong in transferring the few inmates of almost defunct houses to other establishments and applying the revenues to educational purposes. There is little doubt that the king as warmly welcomed Fisher's project as he had that of Fox. Fisher's saintly character and his laudable purpose

made him a useful tool in the hands of the wily king. The ease with which the transfer of Milton had been effected made both king and minister confident that there would be no cavil or outcry.

In the case of Higham all went smoothly, but at Broomhall the unexpected happened. Wolsey, writing from Calais, Oct. 20, 1520, directed the Bishop of Salisbury to remove the nuns from Broomhall. This flatly contradicts the official story, usually accepted, that the house became escheat to the king by voidance; which is about as near truth as it would be to say that a man had parted with his watch after a footpad had knocked him down and taken it. The bishop appears to have handed the task over to a certain Richard Archprieste, notary public, who seems to have been a worthy forerunner of the Leyton and London of Cromwell's day. Metcalfe, the first Master of the college, seems to have been in correspondence with him throughout, and to have been extremely anxious to get possession. Much to their surprise, the poor ladies of Broomhall clung to their poverty-stricken home with great tenacity, as the following letters from Archpriest to Melcalfe show:—

‘Right worshipful, in most hearty wise I recommend me unto you. Signifying that not moche business now ye nones of Broomhall be removed. As touching their resignations to be made I advise you, I shall so devise other by what means or elles by dimission and incorporation in ye other places that they never come more to the house of Broomhall. And will take that ways which I think most sure for your purpose. praying you insomuch I am required by your servant and also have received a bill from you to deliver 20 nobles to the late prioress of Broomhall that I may have deliverance of that acquittance I made to you in London in ye said prioresses name and ye bring or send it as soon as ye conveniently may unto Ramsburie.

‘Over this my lord hath sent me that he will not deliver the evidences unto such time he may see for his discharge the king's grant made unto you for the said house. And as your servant can show you more at large we have had great business to have ye ratall of ye house together and put other things belonging to the same in surety albeit (thanked be god) now

and end is taken concerning all things as Jesu knoweth, wherewith increase of honour preserve you in long health and continual prosperity, from Broomhall in all haste ye 4th day of November.'

It would seem that either Archprieste wrote the thing which was not, or the nuns managed to get back again, for exactly a month later he wrote, 'with great adoe the nuns are got from Broomhall,' and repeats the bishop's refusal to give up the deeds. The king was appealed to, and on December 13, 1520, he wrote the bishop, directing him to give up the deeds, and thanking him for removing the nuns, 'for such enormities as by them practised.' This phrase seems to be the origin of the parrot cry of 'slandrous living' which was used with such great effect later. Nowhere else do we find a single word against the nuns of Broomhall.

On January 9, 1521, Archprieste wrote to Metcalfe, 'My lord is contentyd ye come or send for the evidences of Broomhall at what tyme ye will.' There was, however, one document they sadly wanted, but could not get—the resignation of the prioress and nuns. The 20 nobles which Archprieste implied that he had given to the prioress had not effected the purpose, for on February 8 he wrote saying he had 'sent for the resignation of the ladies late of Broomhall.' What means the gentle Archprieste used to extort her submission we do not know; but no doubt Metcalfe refused to pay the pension of £5 a year promised her. The 20 nobles, if ever she had them, were fast melting away, and the unfortunate lady was faced with starvation. She managed to hold out until August. Her little household had dispersed, so their names do not appear on the dissolution deed, which bears the following endorsement:—

'Pontificate of Leo X, year 9, Aug. 8. Resignation of Johanna Rawlyns prioress of Broomhall, into the hands of the Bishop of Salisbury. In the presence of Richard Archprieste, notary public.'

Inquisitions had been held at Guildford, Windsor and Salisbury, earlier in the year, before juries who knew nothing of the facts beyond the story told them by the king's officers. We may be pretty sure that the prioress was not present nor represented. It was found that a priory of Benedictine nuns, dedicated to St. Margaret, was founded by the King's progenitors at Broomhall—that Joan Rawlyns, the prioress, resigned

in September (*sic*) 1921; that the two nuns who were there with the prioress left the priory as a profane place, and it was consequently dissolved—and that it held all its possessions of the king, to whom they reverted.¹ How far all this is a travesty of the actual facts the reader can judge. The formal transfer to the college took place in October, 1521, and with a view, no doubt, to making the whole business look strictly legal and in order, the formal approval of the Pope was obtained, after some delay in October, 1524. Fisher is said to have paid £300 for the ‘mortmayning’ of Higham and Broomhall, so the Crown was no loser by the transaction.

The following receipt is undated, but if, as it well may be, the first, it shows that poor Joan never got her first half year’s pension in full:—

‘Mdm. I Johanne Rawlyngs late prioress of Broomhall in the county of Berkshire have received of Nicholas Metcalfe master of the house or Colledge of Sent John Evangelist in the town of Cambridge and the scholars of the same the summe of fiftye shillings good and lawful money of England for the half years annuitie annual pension due to me the sd. Johanne Rawlyns at the feast of St. Michael tharkangell laste paste the date hereof and ten shillings of my said annual pension due at the feast of the Annunciation of oure Lady last paste and as yet unpaid. And of the whole sum of five pounds I the sd. Johanne do confess myself well and truly satisfied.’

Joan seems to have made up for this in the long run, for she was still drawing her pension in 1545.

Here, then, the story of Broomhall as a religious foundation ends; but there are several incidents which followed that are of interest, which I will notice as briefly as possible. Henry, not content with the £300 he got from Fisher, cast his eye upon Knowle Grove, close to ‘le knolle’ of the early charters, with a view of throwing it into Windsor Forest by which it was surrounded. A valuation was made, and its extent was found to be 44 acres and a rood. The timber worth £16 16s., whilst the land was valued at £44 5s., one pound an acre. The rental value at 44s. 3d. per year, or one shilling an acre. The king seems to have driven a close bargain, for he only paid

¹ L. & P. Hen. VIII.

for the whole, timber included, £44 12s.² Yet it is only fair to mention that probably the leaseholders under the old monastic lease may have received some compensation. No doubt the college had little option in the matter, and during the reign of Elizabeth or Mary, they made an attempt to get it back.

An undated petition from the college diplomatically ignores the fact that Henry VIII acquired it by purchase, saying 'the college had very leetle recompense,' and makes out that the grove was of no use for hunting purposes, and only worth a pound a year. The college had appointed Sir John Wolley, Elizabeth's Latin Secretary, as their Receiver for Broomhall, and in all probability the petition was made to him, that he might use his influence with his mistress. But as the sale was entered in the records we need not be surprised that the petition was not granted. Wolley seems to have had a great deal of trouble with the tenants, and there is a long letter wherein he throws the blame on his predecessor and declines to be responsible for his peculations.

In 1564 a lease of Broomhall had been given to Roger Ascham, Wolley's predecessor in the secretaryship, but he soon parted with it to Thomas Bennett, yeoman, of Hackfield, (*sic*) Hants, who in turn parted with it to Christopher Heneage and his wife Anne. The lease expired in 1613, and it looks as if another was granted for 21 years. In 1634 the college decided to annex the manor to the Mastership. No great gift at the time, but to-day the golfer has built his house (leasehold) on the sandy waste of the manor, and whilst the college itself has difficulty in making ends meet, the Master has a lordly income.

According to a Terrier of 1634, Broomhall Farm, which I believe occupies the site of the old conventual buildings, is said to be in Egham parish, but liable for all rates and taxes to Windlesham. This anomalous state of things, as might have been expected, led to a good deal of friction and ill-feeling between the two parishes, which came to a head in 1732, when the Egham vestry distrained for the rates and seized a cow. Both parishes seem to have been in a pugnacious mood, and both equally certain of the justice of their case. Litigation followed, and both sides borrowed the money for expenses. From the Egham churchwardens' books we get the following details :

² Particulars of Grants, Augmentations Office, No. 1105.

1753. Journey to Abington Assizes the expenses paid by Mr. Mackason and John Rolfe out of the £21 borrowed of Mr. Crockford.

July 4. Paid all ye bills at Abington which are now in John Rolfe's hands.

Spent at Henley going down to Abington	£1	10	6
At Abington for eating and drinking, five meals	2	5	1
Paid for ye horses at Abington, five horses	1	12	6
Paid at Henley coming back	1	5	0
Paid before we came to Henley for Turnpikes and spent	2	6	
Spent at Benson	2	6	
Paid Mr. Greenway for Council	5	5	0
Paid Stephen Perrin and Field	1	11	6
Paid R. Hart and Mr. West	1	11	6
Paid Turnpike			9
Paid for Wine		2	0
Paid four horses hire	1	10	0
For Mr. Rolfe and Mr. Mackason	2	0	0
Paid Will May		6	6
Paid William Chips		4	6
Spent and paid when we were at Broomhall, with Mr. Lyward and Samuel Very to view the bounds ...		5	0
Mr. Mackason spent at ye King's Head when Mr. Sawyer was there with ye Vestry		6	0
Mr. Mackason spent at ye hut when the witnesses went to view the bounds		3	0½
Rich. Rolfe spent at Broadways upon Mr. Sawyer ...		6	6
Paid Ed. Hart and Thomas Porter		9	0
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	£20	19	4½
John Rolfe in Hand			7½
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	£21	0	0

Egham lost the day, and we are not surprised to find that the rest of the story is not in their annals. For this we must turn to those of Windlesham, where it is recorded that the bells were rung, and the two parishioners who conducted the case received each £8 on account of expenses. The matter does not seem to have ended there, for in 1756 the bells were rung again, and a further sum of £20 paid out for the same purpose.