NOTICE OF A FORMULA OF A PAPAL INDULGENCE, PRINTED
BY PYNSON, AND OF SOME OTHER DOCUMENTS OF LIKE
CHARACTER.

In the course of researches preparatory to the publication of the portion of
the Promptorium Parvulorum, edited for the Camden Society, my attention
was attracted to a fly-leaf, bound up in a copy of the edition of that English-
Latin Dictionary printed by Richard Pynson in 1499, and preserved in the
King's Library at the British Museum. The leaf proved to be the formula
of an Indulgence granted by Pope Julius II.; and there can be little doubt,
on careful comparison of the type, that it is a production of the same press
as the rare volume with which it is found. The binding is not original,
but there seems no reason to suppose that the leaf may not have been in
the book in its earlier state. What may have been the object of printing
the Indulgence, and of binding it up with the Dictionary, it may now be
difficult to determine.¹

The formula seems sufficiently curious to entitle it to a place in this
Journal, more especially as a production of Pynson's press which appears
to have escaped the notice of bibliographers; Ames does not refer to it,
nor does Herbert or Dibdin; the Indulgence consequently finds no place
among the results of Pynson's industry in the year 1508 in the Typo-
graphical Antiquities. The document is remarkable also as containing a
reference to the manufacture of alum in Italy, of which little seems to be
known. Some of our readers may be aware that, in the middle ages, alum,
which was extensively used in dyeing and in the preparation of skins, was
produced at Rochha, the Turkish name of the government which compre-
hended Edessa, in Syria; hence the name Roch alum still in use. It
was also made near Smyrna; and, about the middle of the fifteenth cen-
tury, the manufacture of alum having been established at Tolfa in the
Papal States, and also in other parts of Italy, Pope Pius II. prohibited
the use of oriental alum.

The formula above mentioned is as follows, the contracted words being
here printed in extenso:—

Willelmus, permissione divina Cantuariensis Archiepiscopus, tocius Anglie
primas, et apostolice sedis legatus, et Robertus, permissione divina
Menevensis Episcopus, in regno et dominii Anglie sanctissimi domini
nostri Julii ejusdem nominis Pape secundi ad hec commissarii gene-
rales, tibi [blank for the name of the person to whom the Indulgence
might be granted] auctoritate apostolica nobis in hae parte concessa, ut
confessorem idoneum secularem vel cujusvis ordinis regularem eligere
possis, qui, confessione tua diligentem audita, ab omnibus et singulis tuis

¹ I have much pleasure in acknow-
ledging the kindness of Mr. B. W. Rye, of
the British Museum, to whom I am
indebted for the following observations.
—"This copy of the Promptorium
belonged to James West, President of
the Royal Society, at whose sale in 1773
it was bought for George III. for 2L. 6s.
I think there can be no doubt that the
Indulgence was in the book at the time,
although it seems to have escaped obser-
vation. Neither in West's Sale Catalogue,
nor in the printed Catalogue of the
King's Library about fifty years later, is
there any allusion to it. I believe I was
the first to catalogue it some years ago."
peccatis, criminibus, excessibus, et delictis, etiam si talia forent propter que sedes apostolica esset quovis modo merito consulenda (machinationis in personam summii pontificis, occasionis Episcoporum et aliorum prelatorum superiorum, falsificationis litterarum Apostolicarum et bullarum, delationis armorum et aliorum prohibitorum ad infideles, sentenciarum incursarum occasione aluminium de partibus infidelium ad fideles delatorum, quo ad illos dumtaxat qui alumina infidelium emerunt et ad regnum Anglie aliaque Christi fidelium loca devehy [sic] curaverunt, casibus dumtaxat exceptis) semel in vita et in mortis articulo, in casibus vero non reservatis tociens quotiens id petieris, plenarie absolvere possit et valeat, necnon vota quaecumque (ultramarino voto, et ingressus religionis et castitatis votis dumtaxat exceptis) in alia pietatis opera commutare possit, dummodo secundum taxam nostram in capsa ad hoc deputata pro fabrica basilice Sancti Petri elemosinam imposueris, de apostolice potestatis uberiore gratia, auctoritate prefata, tenore presentium plenam et liberam facultatem damus et elargimur. Dispensandi autem et componendi facultatem in omnibus casibus et articulis qui in litteris Apostolicis super indulgentia presenti confectis plenus continentur, et dispensationem seu compositionem requirunt, nobis ipsis aut a nobis ad hoc specialiter deputatis seu subdelegatis reservamus. In cujus rei fidem et testimonium presentes litteras fieri fecimus. Datum apud Lamebith anno a nativitate domini millesimo quingentesimo octavo, tercio die Maii, pontificatus prefati sanctissimi domini nostri Pape anno quinto.

At the foot of this formula is a woodcut of the arms of Pope Julius II., who was of the De Rovere family, the charge being an oak tree; and the escutcheon has the usual accompaniments of the cross-keys and the tiara. It will be observed that it is dated in 1508, in the fifth year of his pontificate, being nine years later than the date of the edition of the Dictionary in which it is found. The work had in all probability remained in quires in Pynson's warehouse, and this copy had not been bound until after that date.

The Indulgence appears to be a form, with a blank for the name of the person to whom it might be granted. It purports to be issued by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, and the Bishop of St. David's, Robert Sherborn, as the Pope's Commissaries General ad hcec, for that purpose, and to authorise the appointment, by the person for whose benefit it was intended, of a confessor who might hear his confession, and grant him absolution of all sins, &c., with the exception of some which are especially mentioned, including the exportation of arms and other prohibited things to the infidels, and the importation of alum from them. There is also a remarkable clause auxiliary to the works then in progress at St. Peter's in Rome, to which the energy of Julius II. had given a more systematic impulse. The first stone of Bramante's structure was laid by that Pontiff in April, 1506. In the Indulgence, dated Jan 11, 1510, in furtherance of that purpose, and which a few years later excited the memorable controversy between Luther and Tetzel, Julius II. authorised, in almost the same terms as those used in the formula above given, the appointment of private confessors; absolution of certain sins being excepted, with special mention—"censurarum occasione aluminium Tulphæ nostræ ac de partibus infidelium ad fideles contra prohibitionem nostram delatorum," Amort de orig. Indulgentiaram, p. 206; comp. also p. 210.

We avail ourselves of this opportunity to call attention to some other instances of Indulgences authorising the appointment of private Con-
fessors. We have found the following among some miscellaneous documents relating to the manor of Kettlethorpe, Lincolnshire, which had been kindly sent for our inspection by the Rev. Edwin Jarvis, Rector of Hackthorn in that county. It purports to be granted by the Chamberlains, Warden, and Procurator of the Hospital of the Holy Trinity of St Thomas the Martyr in Rome, and is dated at London, Aug. 1st, 1461. It is here printed in extenso:—


Indorsed at one corner—Per annum j. d.

To the foregoing document was appended by a parchment label a seal in red wax of the Hospital above mentioned; a small fragment only remains. 3 We are not aware of any other impression. Several brass matrices, however, of seals of this Hospital exist in this country, and a description of them may here be admissible.

The seal of which the earliest notice is known to me is a matrix formerly in possession of Mr. Maton of Salisbury, stated to have been found there during alterations in the cathedral about the year 1791. The Rev.

2 This word is written homis, with a line over it. The reading in extenso appears to be as above given. Compare Madox, Form. Ang. No. Dxciv. p. 336, where the phrase “Salute in utroque homine” occurs.

3 On close examination it appears that this impression was from a seal resembling in type the first or second of those above described, although probably from a different matrix; a little mitred figure may be discerned in a pointed-arched niche or panel under the feet of the Supreme being; the base of the tabernacle work forming the principal design is corbeled out, and courses of masonry are distinctly marked thereon.
Dr. Milner, the historian of Winchester, communicated to the Gentleman's Magazine an impression and notice of this seal; it is figured vol. lxi. part ii. p. 1177. The device, as also that of all the other matrices of seals of the Hospital hereafter to be described, is the customary representation of the Holy Trinity under a canopy of tabernacle work; in a niche beneath is a demi-figure, doubtless of St. Thomas of Canterbury, in an attitude of supplication; the legend is as follows:—\(\text{Fraternitate Hospitalis. St. Thomas martiris in Roma.}\) Date, fifteenth century. The form is pointed oval, the seal measures about 2½ by 1½ inches. It may be observed that the form and dimensions are the same, or nearly so, in all the seals of the Hospital here noticed.

In the British Museum a matrix exists similar to that above described; but, if any reliance may be placed on the engraving given in the Gentleman's Magazine, the two seals are not identical. The general details of the design are the same. The legend, which is almost literally the same, is differently divided, the figure of St. Thomas occurring in the latter between \(\text{frat'ri.}\) and \(\text{thomr} ;\) whereas in that preserved in the National Collection the break is after the contracted word—\(\text{Hospitala}\)—of which the last syllable thus terminates; some other variations are also to be observed.

Another matrix is in the British Museum, superior in design and preservation to the last, to which it bears a general resemblance. The canopy is more elaborate; the background behind the Trinity is filled with tracery; beneath is an escutcheon, France and England quarterly; the legend, not interrupted at the lower part of the seal as in the two already described, is as follows—\(\text{Fraternitate Hospitalis s'ti. thome mart' in roma.}\) This matrix, as I am informed by Mr. Franks, was formerly in the Sloane collection.

A fourth matrix of the seal of this Fraternity was exhibited by the Rev. S. Blois Turner in the museum at the meeting of the Archaeological Institute in Lincoln, in 1848. See Museum Catalogue, Lincoln volume, p. xlvii. It was discovered at Botesdale, Suffolk, and was in the possession of Mr. Pallant, by whose executors it was presented to Mr. Blois Turner. The device resembles that of the seal first described, and has a small suppliant demi figure of St. Thomas in a niche under the Trinity. The legend is as follows—\(\text{Fraternitate Hospitalis s'ti. thome mart' in roma.}\)

Two other seals have been preserved, differing in some particulars from those already noticed. These were, as I believe, formerly in Gale's possession. One, of good workmanship, has for its device the usual representation of the Holy Trinity; beneath which is a figure of the archbishop, not suppliant, but holding the cross-staff in one hand, the other being raised in benediction. On the dexter side of this lower division of the seal is an escutcheon, France and England quarterly. The coat of France appears in both quarterings to be semy. The legend, in bold Lombardic capitals, is as follows—\(\text{AD CAUSAS HOSPITALIS S. THOME MART. IN ROMA.}\) This matrix, which may have been executed on the continent, is now preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.

I have an impression of a matrix, possibly the other already noticed as having been in the possession of Gale. The general design is the same as that of the seal last described. The workmanship is rather rough, resembling the effect of a casting rather than of an original matrix. The figure of St. Thomas and the escutcheon occur upon this seal below the representation...
of the Trinity, as on the last, but the coat of France is charged with three fleurs de lys only. St. Thomas holds the cross-staff in his left hand; in the seal previously described it is in his right. An annulet is introduced in the field, at the right side of the head of the saint. The legend, identical with that given as on one of the seals which belonged to Gale, is as follows: $\Rightarrow$ p'curator' hospitalis s. thom' martiris in roma. I have not succeeded in ascertaining where this matrix was procured.

Little appears to be known of the history of the institution at Rome to which these seals appertained. Dr. Milner states that it was a hospital for the reception of English pilgrims, the origin of which he traces to the Schola Anglorum founded at Rome in 727 by Ina, king of the West Saxons, with consent of Pope Gregory II., and adjoining which the Saxon monarch built a church in honour of the Virgin Mary, for the benefit of the English visiting Rome, with a place for the burial of those dying there. (See Matthew Westminister, p. 137.) Among persons of note who resided there was the exiled Burthred, king of the Mercians. Matthew Paris records that the school was augmented by Offa in 794, and converted into a hospital, called the Hospital of the Holy Spirit. After various casualties and fresh endowments it subsisted as a Hospital for Pilgrims, as Dr. Milner states, until the reign of Henry IV., when it was repaired by Sir Robert Knowles. Dr. Milner supposed that the hospital may have been dedicated anew at this period, under the title of the Blessed Trinity and St. Thomas the Martyr, by which it was still known when he wrote, having been brought back in 1578 to its original intention as a place of study for English youth.\footnote{Gent. Mag. lxi. p. 1177. edit.; from Escheat Roll 20 Edw. III.} No evidence, however, appears to have been adduced in proof of the supposed identity of the institution thus designated with the ancient Saxon foundation in Rome, described as "Hospitale apud ecclesiam S. Maris in Saxia in urbe Romana—quod Hospitale S. Spiritus communiter nuncupatur, et quod quidem Hospitale Anglorum dicetur, et Anglorum fuit hospicio deputatum."\footnote{Mon. Ang. vol. vi. p. 1116. Caley's Amort, de Orig. Indulg. p. 169.} The indulgence granted in 1477 by Sixtus IV. confirming numerous indulgences conceded to this hospital by previous pontiffs, designates it "Hospitale S. Spiritus in Saxia alme urbis;" and we may hence conclude that the learned historian of Winchester was in error in the conjecture that its name had been changed early in the fifteenth century. It may be observed that the greater number of hospitals were dedicated to St. Thomas the Martyr; and it is remarkable that so little should be known of a fraternity which appears, by the occurrence of so many matrices found in this country, to have had considerable relations with England during the fifteenth century.

Another document of the same description as those already noticed is in the possession of Mr. Maskell. It is in a few parts illegible, but from the general purport it appears to be a grant of the privilege of confraternity by William Lyale, priest and chaplain, acting on the behalf of the wardens and brethren of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, who had the privilege of choosing their own confessors. This document, which is dated 1461, the same year as that last described, is as follows:

Universis Christi fidelibus ad quorum noticias presentes literae pervenerint, Nos, Willelmus Lyale, presbiter et capellanus honoris [sic] Sepuleri domini
nostri Jhesu Christi in Jerusalem, procurator ecclesiarum in q . . . .

. . . . perperit alvus (?) virginalis. Noverit universitas vestra quod, cum
in privilegiis apostoliciis per sacrosanctam sedem apostolicam dicti Sepulcri
custodibis et ejusdem loci confratibus ab antiquis temporibus indulgit, et
per eandem sedem de novo confirmatis, quamplures indulgencie continean-
tur, quorum, licet non omnes, quodam sequuntur, videlicet, quod omnes con-
fratres et conosores dictisepulcri possint eligere sibi, tociens quociens volu-
erint, ydonesos confessores seculares vel regulares, qui eis valeant concedere
plenam remissionem omnium peccatorum suorum de quibus sunt vere contriti
et confessi, casibus sedi apostolice duntaxat exceptis, presbiteris, clericis, ac
viri religiosis, cujuscunque ordinis aut habitus fuerint, necnon omnibus
ad] hanc fraternitatem admisis, qui de bonis suis dicto Sepulcro aliquid
donaverint, quicquid per inpotenciam, negligenciam, oblivionem, aut
corporis debilitatem in divinis vel horis canonicis omiserint, per ydonesos
confessores gratia collacionis predicte penitus eis remittetur. Nos igitur,
ex auctoritate nobis in hac parte commissa, Ricardum Erle in confratrem
nostrum generosum recepimus ad privilegia omnium indulgenciarum con-
cessarum, quorum summa ad octo millia annorum et totidem quadragena-
rum, ac triginta millia missarum, neenon et totidem spalteriorum,9 ex
primitiva largicione apostolorum Petri et Pauli, cum multiplici graciarii
augmento eorum omnium successorum usque in presens, indulgenciariquem
incrementis a singulis Romanis pontificibus in futurum perpetue conceden-
darum missarum, oracionum, ac omnium aliorum terre sancte suffragiorum,
et Sepulcri domini Jhesu Christi in Jerusalem, ipsum volumnus esse partici-

A fragment only of a seal of dark coloured wax remains appended by a
parchment label. The form was oval or circular, not pointed oval; the
device appears to have been a cross, with the crown of thorns suspended
over the transverse limbs; the scourge and a branch, probably the hyssop,
are introduced in the field. On the sinister side there appears to be a
second cross; the design may have consisted of the three crosses upon
Calvary. A few small traces only of the legend may be seen.

In vol. xii. of this Journal, p. 292, we gave another document from
Mr. Maskell’s Collection, being a certificate, dated in 1478, by a knight,
Humphrey Nanfaunt, captive among the Turks, that monies had been paid
for his redemption, and for the purchase of the benefit of a Papal Indulgence
which also authorised the choice of a private confessor. In Sir Peter
Leycester’s Cheshire, p. 376, mention is found of a document of still earlier
date, granting the like privilege, as follows:—

“Sir John Seyville, Knt., brother of the Hospital of St. John of
Jerusalem, and Procurer of the Pardon or Indulgence of the Castle of
St. Peter, (by virtue of this Indulgence of Pope Alexander V. granted to
all those who have put their helping hand to the fortification of the said
Castle, that they shall chuse themselves a confessor) now granteth to Hugh
de Toft and Alice his wife, because of their charity and aid towards the

7 The document is here much damaged.
This passage may perhaps have had
reference to those churches in the Holy
Land mentioned by Amort, De Origine
Indulgentiarum, pp. 217, 219, and of
which Bethlehem was one.

8 A word seems to have been erased
here, and generosum written over the
erasure in different ink.

9 Sic. The word occurs elsewhere thus
written, and also Spalmodia for Psalmus,
Spalmodia, &c. See Ducange.
said Castle, full liberty by the Pope’s authority to chuse themselves a con-

fessor; whereunto the seal of the Indulgence for the said Castle is affixed.

Dated ‘apud Templum Bruer,’ A.D. 1412.”

I am not aware that any impression of a seal of the Indulgence of the Castle of St. Peter has been noticed. It appears, however, that the Indulgences in question were in considerable request, since not less than five matrices have been found in this country, each of them with the

legend,—Sigillum Indulg[encias] Hospitalis Castr[i]i Sancti Petri.—The

device is, in each instance, a castellated building within an embattled wall, in which is a gateway with the portcullis half raised. Within, over a similar gateway with a portcullis, stands the Holy Lamb; over this are embattled turrets, with a central tower above all, in which a bell is suspended.

One of these matrices, in possession of Mr. T. Sharp of Coventry in 1806, is figured Gent. Mag., vol. lxxvii. part ii. pp. 1021, 1029, and described vol. lxxvi. part ii. p. 893; another is figured ibid., p. 1105; and a third, of much more elaborate design, in the same volume, p. 793, where it is stated to

have been lately found in an orchard at the Marquis Townshend’s farm called Oakland in Walton-on-Trent, Derbyshire. The brass face had been gilt but was much worn. This matrix is now in the British Museum. I have recently received from Matthew Dawes, Esq., F.S.A., an impression of a fourth matrix, now belonging to him, and found some years since in a field at Borough Hill near Walton-on-Trent. It resembles that described, and appears to be in very perfect preservation. A fifth, inferior in execution, was in the Tyssen Collection, and is now in the possession of Mr. Hankinson. I am indebted to the Rev. S. Blois Turner for an impression.

In closing these notices of a subject which, so far as I recollect, does not appear to have been hitherto examined with the attention which it may well claim, in connection with the social and religious conditions of our country in the century immediately preceding the Reformation, it were scarcely necessary to advert to Chaucer’s graphic description of the Pardoner, or to the keen satire of Piers Ploughman. They are familiar to all who are conversant with the literature of our country. The documents now placed before our readers, and the frequent occurrence of seals such as have been described,—the medals, as seals have sometimes been termed, of Mediaeval History,—present to us evidence of the extensive distribution of Indulgences in the fifteenth century. The increasing eagerness for their acquisition must necessarily have opened the door to various abuses, to which it were needless here to advert. As early as the year 1300 the Council of Cologne had deemed it advisable to check the intrusion of the “Quest[ionarii] golari[i],” who carried about Indulgences from door to door; and, in like manner the Council of Mayence, in the following century, peremptorily again animadverted upon the “abusum Quest[ionariorum], qui quotidie excrescit.” At a later period, it will be remembered, the evils consequent upon such practices in our own country were met with summary severity: by the stat. 22 Hen. VIII., 1530, all proctors and pardoners going about in any county without sufficient authority were to be treated as vagabonds.

ALBERT WAY.

1 Reprinted in Ormerod’s Cheshire, vol. i. p. 395. On the back of the deed is written an absolution in Latin.

2 A communication on the subject by Mr. Hamper will also be found Gent. Mag. vol. i. p. 391. Among seals in Horace Walpole’s possession was one for Indulgences by Pope Eugenius IV.