

Original Documents.

THE annexed petition, hitherto unpublished, affords a curious illustration of provincial manners in the fourteenth century.

It is addressed to the earl of Arundel by William Drake-lowe and Richard Hormiglowe, merchants of Lichfield, who state that on Friday, the feast of the Purification, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Edward the Third, A.D. 1342, they sent their servants, with two horses laden with fardels of spicery and mercery, worth forty pounds, to the market to be holden at Stafford on the following Saturday. The men had proceeded on their journey as far as Cannock-wood, when they encountered Sir Robert de Rideware, knight, and two followers, by whom they were captured and taken to the priory of Lappeley; one of the men however, contrived to escape. In the priory were several friends and accomplices of Sir Robert de Rideware as well knights as others, and among them Sir John de Odyngeseles^a; here a division of the plunder was made, each individual taking a share of the spicery and mercery "according to his estate." On Saturday the whole company rode from Lappeley to the priory of Blythebury, where Rideware represented to the prioress that they were retainers of the king, sore travailed, and prayed house-room for his company. This would appear to have been refused, as they broke open the barns of the priory, had their will of the hay and oats, and stayed all night against the wish of the prioress. In the meanwhile the serving man who had escaped, having followed them at a distance, went to the king's bailiff-errant for the county of Stafford, at Lichfield, and gave him to understand that the robbers with their booty were at Blythebury. Whereupon the bailiff, taking with him some of the townfolk of Lichfield, proceeded thither, and finding the malefactors, summoned them to surrender to the king's peace, which they would not do, but attacked the bailiff and his people, and wounded several of them; being at length routed, they were hotly pur-

^a Sir John de Odyngseles, who held lands in Berlaston hundred, co. Stafford,

seems to have died in 27 Edw. III. Inquis. post mortem, vol. ii. p. 182.

sued by the bailiff, who caught and decapitated four of their number. This victory achieved, that officer took the stolen chattels into his custody and rode with his company towards Lichfield; but in the interim Rideware, having rallied his band, and being reinforced by Sir Walter de Rideware^b and others, came up with the bailiff between Blithebury and Ridware Parva^c, and recovered his plunder by a sudden onslaught.

These conflicts seem to have occurred on Sunday. The bailiff having thus failed to obtain redress for the petitioners, they went on the following Thursday to Stafford to shew their grievance, but there, posted at the gates, were followers of the robbers, who would not suffer them to enter the town, and from whom they scarcely escaped without grievous harm. In conclusion William Drakelowe and Richard Hormiglowe represent, that they and many of the Lichfield folk are so menaced by the said robbers and their maintainers that they dare not venture out of the town. Into all which matters they pray the earl of Arundel to cause enquiry to be made at his first session at Lichfield, the felony having been committed within the franchise of the bishop of Chester.

This interesting document is preserved among the miscellaneous petitions in the Tower of London.

T. H. T.

A treshonorable segneur si ly pleise counte Darundel justice nostre segneur le Roy moustrent William de Drakelowe e Richart de Hormiglowe marchauns de Lichefeld qe le vendredy in la feste de la Purification nostre dame lan du regne nostre segneur le Rey [E.] tierce puy le Conquest quinzisime les avantditz William et Richart manderent lur garsuns ove deus chivals ove deus fardels de especerie et mercerie pris de xl. liveres dancresece au marche Destafford le samady proschein suaunt. E sire come les avantditz garsuns ove lur chivals e fardels vindrent desout le boys del Canoke entre le dit boys e lewe de Trente parentre Wolseleye e Hoywode de dens la franchise nostre segneur levesqe de Cestre illeqes vint sire Robert de Rideware chivaler e deus valletz ove ly e les ditz garsuns chivals e fardels felonessment encountre la pees pristrent e les amienerent tantqe a la priorie de Lappeleye, mes lun garsun eschapa. E en la dite priorie troverent sire Johan de Oddyngeseles, Esmon de Oddyngeseles e plusieurs autres auxi bien chivalers come autres gentz desconus de lur cumpanye e de lur covyne, e entre eux tous departirent les avantditz mercerie e especerie, chescun de sa porcion solump sun estat. E sire le sammady proschein suant tote la

^b Sir Walter de Ridware, lord of Hamstall Ridware, co. Stafford; his lady was a widow in 32 Edw. III.

^c Likewise called Ridware Media, and Pipe Ridware.

cumpaignye ove lur larcin chivaucherent de Lappeleye tant qe a la priorie de Bythebury, e le dit sire Robert vynt a la prioressse e ly pria del houstel pur la dite cumpaignie qe furent gentz nostre segneur le Rey moud travailles, les quels debruserent les huy . . . des graunges en la dite priorie e pristrent feyn et aveigne a lur volente countre le gre la dite prioressse e demorerent illeqes tote cele nuyt. E sire le garsun le dit William qe feust a large les pursuy de loyns e aytant sur eux vynt au baillif errant nostre segneur le Rey en le counste Destafford a Lychfelde fesaunt entendant a ly qe les ditz larouns ov lur larcin furent a Blythebury. Par quei le dit baillif prist olly gentz de Lichefeld e sen ala e trova illeqes les avantditz larons ove lur larcin avantdit, e le dit baillif comanda au ditz larouns qe eux rendisissent a la pees nostre seyneur le Roy, ils sei rendre ne voleynt, eyns se tournerent a defense e seterent au dit baillife e as autres gens e naffrent plusours de eux. Mes au darrein les avantditz larons sei mistrent a la fute e le dit baillif e ses gens freschement pursuerunt les ditz larons e les atre de ditz larouns pristerent fuantz e les decolerent. E sire le dit baillif lur chastels illeqes de lour larcin prist en sa garde al oepe nostre segneur le Roy e fust en alant ove sa cumpaignie vers Lichfield e vynt le dit sire Robert qe avoit relye les uns des ditz larons e sire Wauter de Rideware e plusours autres olly entre Blythebury e petit Rideware de denz la dite fraunchyse del avant dite evesqe, e sur le dit baillife fesoient refons countre la pees e les ditz chatels cest asavoir chivals armures especerie e mercerie a la value suys dit pristerent e enporterent. E sire le jeudy proschein suant le jour de les avantditz William e Richart viendrent a Estafford daver feat lour demonstrance de leurs perte e damage quils avomt resceu sire illeqes furent a les portes gentz de la meintenance les ditz larons e ne voleint suffrir les avant ditz William ne Richard entrer e le arke un de ses cumpaignons couperent . . . a peyne saunz grevure mal eschaperent. E sire les avant ditz William e Richart e plusours gentz de la ville de Lichfield sont menace des ditz larons e lour meintenours quils nosent nule part aler hors de la dite ville. De quei sire se vous plest pur Deux veuller ordiner vos premereines assencions a Lichfield si a la veryte des choses suisdites veullet atendre desicome les felonies suisdites se firent dedens la dite fraunchise. E sire pur Deux voillet ordiner qe deus homes gens ou chivalers ou autres bons e leals soient eslu e jure de eslyre une bone enqueste, qar si la dite enqueste seit eslu par baillif a peyne si vous atendret la verite des choses suys dites. Sire de eyde e remedie de cestes choses prient les ditz William e Richart pour Deux.

A lur segneur le counte de Arundel.