

Original Documents.

BOND BY THE ABBOT AND CONVENT OF WINCHCOMBE,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ANCIENT USAGE OF CHANGE OF SURNAME.

AMONGST the miscellaneous documents collected by the late Mr. Ambrose Glover, and chiefly relating to the county of Surrey, one relating to the Benedictine Abbey of Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, has been preserved. It might perhaps be regarded as of trifling moment, were it not that it supplies a striking illustration of the usage of change of surname, frequently observed, as it would appear, in monastic establishments, and occasionally practised by the higher dignitaries of the Church. It may seem needless to remind our readers that this practice had been customary with the popes, and commenced, as Platina (cited by Camden in his "Remaines") states that some had asserted, by Sergius II., A.D. 844, who had, previously to being raised to the papacy, the less euphonous appellation of Hog's Mouth,—*Os Porci*. Adrian III., Burius informs us, had been called Agapatus, and Stephen VI. had borne the name of Basilius; Sergius IV. also, that of Peter, which out of humility and respect to the Prince of Apostles, he abandoned, and thenceforward was known by that of Sergius. The Popes have from that period always changed their baptismal name on being advanced to the pontificate.

The document in question, for which we are indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Thomas Hart, of Reigate, in whose possession the collections of Mr. Glover remain, is a bond by the Abbot and Convent of Winchcombe to William Mownslowe, of the city of London, Mercer, in the sum of two hundred marks, conditioned for further assurance by the said abbot and convent, and quiet enjoyment by William Mownslowe, his heirs, and assigns, of a messuage, &c., in the parish of St. Bride's, London. Such bonds not unfrequently accompanied conveyances, in the place of the covenants for title now in use.

It is remarkable, however, that, in addition to the conventual seal, which was all that was required to make the bond an effectual legal instrument, the abbot and prior, and several of the monks testified their privity and assent to it, by signing their names between the bond and the condition. The concurrence of the monks did not indeed render them individually liable, they being *civilliter mortui*, but served to show their assent to the transaction; a precaution taken, probably, because the bond was made (judging from the identity of surname) to a relation of the abbot's. A conveyance of some kind had most likely accompanied the bond, and was, probably, a step taken in consequence of the apprehension the abbot and convent began to entertain that their possessions were not safe against the king, seeing he had, in the preceding year, seized those of the lesser monasteries. It may have been a fictitious sale to William Mownslowe for the preservation of the property, or a real sale, the abbot and convent knowing that money was more easily concealed than messuages or lands. In the Act of 31st Hen. VIII. c. 13, by which the greater monasteries (of which this was one) were dissolved, is contained a clause making void all sales by the abbots, &c. (within a year previous) of lands, &c., of their ancient foundation.

Noverint universi per presentes nos, Richardum, Abbatem domus, et monasterii beate Marie et sancti Kenelmi regis et martyris de Winchelcumba, in comitatu Glowcestrie, et ejusdem loci conventum, unanimi nostris assensu, consensu pariterque, et voluntate tocius capituli nostri, teneri et firmiter obligari Willelmo Mownslowe marcelo Londonie in ducentis marcis sterlingorum, solvendis eidem Willelmo, aut suo certo attornato, aut executoribus suis, ad festum omnium sanctorum proxime futurum. Ad quam quidem solucionem bene et fideliter faciendum ego, predictus Richardus Abbas, et Conventus, obligo me et successores meos per presentes. In cujus rei testimonium presentibus sigillum nostrum commune apposuimus. Datum in domo nostra capitulari, decimo septimo die mensis Octobris. Anno regni Regis Henrici octavi vicesimo nono. [1537]. Ita est ego Richardus Ancelmus, Abbas,¹ propria manu. Ita est ego Johannes Augustinus, prior, propria manu. Ita est Willelmus Omersley. Per me Johannem Gabrielem. Per me Richardum Angelum. Per me Willelmum Maurum. Per me Willelmum Overbury. Per me Hugonem Egwinum. Per me Ricardum Barnardum. Per me Ricardum Martinum. Per me Georgium Leonardum. Per me Johannem Anthonium.² Per me Gulielmum Hieronymum. Per me Christoferum Benedictum. Per me Walterum Aldelmum. Per me Richardum Michaelem. Per me Willelmum Kenelmum. Per me Ricardum Ambrosium.

The condycyon off thys oblygacyon ys suche y^t yff y^e a bowe bownden Abbott and convent and hys successours doo suffre and cause to be done euery suche thyng and thyngys, act and actys, as schall be deuysyd or aduysyd from tyme to tyme by the counsell lernyd yn the lawe off the abowe namyd Wyllyam Mownslowe, hys eyrys and assygnes, for a suer and perfytt assurans yn the lawe to be hadde and made to the same Wyllyam Mownslowe, hys eyrys and assygnes, att the costys and chargys yn the lawe off the a-bowe bownden Abbott and hys successors, off and for one messuage or tenement with hys appurtenauncys, wharfys or kayys, gardens, and off all other howsys, landys, rentys, and tenementys, whatt soeuer, off whyche the a-bowe bowndene Abbott att the makyng off these presentys ys seasyd yn the ryghtt off hys howse and monastery, a-bowe namyd, yn the citie off London, and withyn the paryshe off saynt Brydys yn the subbarhys off the same citie. And also yff the a-bowe bownden Abbott and Convent, and hys successours, doo suffre the same Wyllyam Mownslowe, hys eyrys and assygnes, quyetly, lawfully and peaseble to enjoy the same messuage or tenement, with all other the premysys, as ys a-fore sayd, with owtt lett, dyssesine, dysturbans and ynterrupcyon off the sayd Abbott and off hys successors, or any other by hys or their procurment, assent, commaundment or agrement, and further dyschargyd off all former bargaynes, salys, lesys, promysys, grawntys, chargys and yncumberauncys whatsoeuer, y^t then thys present oblygacyon to be woyde, or else to stande yn hys full force and wertue.

(Seal apparently affixed on a slip of the same parchment, cut about two-thirds of the breadth, at foot of the bond; the seal now torn away.)

It must have been noticed by many readers, who may have investigated subjects connected with the history of monasteries, how frequently, for example in the lists of the Principals of Houses, and of Pensions remaining

¹ The word *abbas*, as likewise *prior*, after the succeeding signature, is an interlineation, but seemingly contemporary with the signature.

² Interlineation in darker ink, above the last-mentioned name.

in charge subsequently to the Dissolution, persons are described by two names, the first being very frequently taken from names of places, whilst the *alias* appears to be of the ordinary class of English surnames. To this usage Camden adverts, observing that, besides the popes, "other religious men also when they entered into some Orders, changed their names in times past, following therein (as they report) the Apostle, that changed his name from *Saul* to *Paul*, after he entered into the ministry."³ Mr. Markland, in his Remarks on Surnames, cites the assertion of Holinshed (27 Hen. VI.), that it was a fashion "from a learned spirituall man, to take awaie the fathers' surname (were it never so worshipful or ancient) and give him for it the name of the town he was born in."⁴ Martene, in his Observations upon Ancient Monastic Rites, has shown that novices, when they took the monastic habit, were accustomed to change the names by which they previously had been known; and he cites instances, showing the antiquity of this usage, which doubtless was significant that they had thus become dead to the world, as also *civiliter mortui*, and were regenerated, so to speak, to a new and spiritual life.⁵ Charpentier, also, in his additions to Ducange, (under *Nomina Mutari*) has the following observation:—"Nomen etiam mutabant Monachi: quod in aliquot Ordinibus Ecclesiasticis etiam hodie in usu est." As regards also the change of name at the ordination of bishops, Martene states that such was the ancient custom, of which Bede gives an instance ("Hist. Ang." lib. 5, c. 12) where he records that St. Willibrord, ordained Bishop of the Frisons, A.D. 696, received from the Pope the name of Clement. Thus also, in the eleventh century, St. Astrius, when raised to the dignity of an archbishop in Hungary, took the name of Anastasius; and Jazomir, when Bishop of Bremen, that of Gebehard. The same usage obtained likewise in the Greek church; ecclesiastics who were advanced to the episcopate usually assuming thenceforth the names of persons eminent of old for their piety and holy life.⁶ It is now the custom in all religious orders, both of men and women, that individuals making the profession, that is, taking the last vows, should change the entire name. Alban Butler remarks that persons generally take a new name "when they enter a religious state, partly to express their obligation of becoming new men, and partly to put themselves under the special patronage of certain saints, whose examples they propose to themselves for their models." ("Lives of Saints," note, June 29.)

The Fasti of English Bishopricks, and the lists of heads of monasteries, would supply a multitude of examples, showing the change of the patronymic for a name derived from the place of birth. There are, however, another class of surnames thus assumed, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, being those of men eminent of old for their piety or their learning, saints, doctors of the church, and even angels. To this peculiar fashion, which does not appear hitherto to have been sufficiently noticed, it was no doubt owing that John Knollys, Prior of Cokesford, Norfolk, in 1463, appears with the *alias* of Clement, and other examples might be cited, in the fifteenth century. Anthony Kitchin, the last abbot of Eynesham, assumed the more euphonous appellation of Dunstan. The bond now under consideration appears to present the most remarkable illustration of this usage, hitherto noticed. Being dated so short a time previously to

³ Camden's Remaines, p. 140, edit. 1637.

⁴ Archæologia, vol. xviii. p. 108.

⁵ Martene, de Antiq. Ecc. Rit. lib. i. c. i. art. x. and lib. v. c. iii.

⁶ Ibid. lib. i. c. viii. art. x.

the Surrender on Dec. 3, 1539, we are enabled to ascertain the real names of the subscribing parties, by comparison of the names appended to the bond with those in the list of inmates of the monastery, as enumerated in the schedule of pensions.⁷ During the interval of about fourteen months which had occurred since the execution of the bond, little change appears to have occurred in the establishment, and the subscribing parties, whose high-sounding names grace that document, re-appear under very ordinary and mean appellatives. This singular comparison is shown in the subjoined list, the second column comprising the names of the monks at the period of the Surrender.

Signatures to the Bond, Oct. 17, 1537.

RICHARDUS ANCELMUS, *Abbas*.
 JOHANNES AUGUSTINUS, *Prior*.
 WILLELMUS OMERSLEY.
 JOHANNES GABRIEL.
 RICARDUS ANGELUS.
 WILLELMUS MAURUS.
 WILLELMUS OVERBURY.
 HUGO EGWINUS.
 RICARDUS BARNARDUS.
 RICARDUS MARTINUS.
 GEORGIUS LEONARDUS.
 JOHANNES ANTHONIUS.
 GULIELMUS HIERONYMUS.
 CHRISTOFERUS BENEDICTUS.
 WALTERUS ALDELMUS.
 RICHARDUS MICHAHEL.
 WILLELMUS KENELMUS.
 RICARDUS AMBROSIVS.

Surrender, Dec. 3, 1539.

RICHARD MOUNSLOW, *last Abbot*.
 JOHN HANCOCK, *Prior*.
 WILLIAM CRAKER.
 JOHN WHALLEY.
 RICHARD FREEMAN.⁸
 WILLIAM BLOSSOM.
 WILLIAM BRADLEY.
 HUGH COWPER.
 RICHARD BOIDON.
 RICHARD PARKER,
 GEORGE FOO.⁹
 WILLIAM TRENTHAM.
 CHRISTOPHER CHAWNUT.
 WALTER COWPER.
 RICHARD WILLIAMS.
 WILLIAM HOWARD.¹
 RICHARD BANISTER.

One only, John Anthonius, occurs without a corresponding name in the later list. He may have died during the brief interval; and Walter Turbot appears in the enumeration of 1539, who, it may be supposed, supplied the vacancy. It will be observed that of the eighteen names appended to the bond two only are of the more usual class, taken from some locality, probably the birth-place of the individual; these are Omersley, which may be Ombersley, a parish in Worcestershire, near Stourport; the other is Overbury, a parish in the same county, on the confines of Gloucestershire.

Amongst the saintly names thus assumed by the monks of Winchcombe, the reader will not fail to notice some which were specially appropriate; not merely as that of St. Benedict, the founder of their order, but such as Egwin, the canonised founder of Evesham Abbey, not far distant, a scion of the royal race of Mercia; he became Bishop of Worcester, A.D. 692; we find Aldhelm, also, Bishop of the West Saxons in the seventh century, a name cherished in local veneration; and, above all, Kenelm, the sainted Prince of Mercia, the son, moreover, of Kenulph, founder of the Abbey of Winchcombe, where the relics of the murdered Kenelm were subsequently enshrined, on their discovery under the thorn in Clent Cowbatch, in the adjacent county of Worcester. A. W.

⁷ Willis, *Mitred Abbeys*, Addit. vol. i. p. 71. Dugd. Mon. Angl. vol. ii., p. 299, edit. by Calcy.

⁸ Called Richard Freemarten, in the Return of 1553.

⁹ Called George Rose, *ibid.*

¹ William Whorewood, *ibid.*