

Original Documents.

RALPH LORD CROMWELL.

By JAMES GAIRDNER, Assistant Keeper of the Public Records.

THE name of Cromwell occupies such a conspicuous place in one particular era of English history that we do not perhaps very easily recall it as the surname and title of a noble family in the Middle-Ages. But, in truth, it was to this more ancient family that the surname properly belonged. The family of the Protector were not originally Cromwells, but only three generations before him had borne the name of Williams. Thomas Cromwell, the powerful minister, by whose instrumentality Henry VIII. suppressed the monasteries, had a nephew named Sir Richard Williams, who, by leave, or, as it is said, by special desire, of that king, exchanged his Welsh patronymic for the surname of his uncle. To that change it is owing that the great Protector is known to every one as Oliver Cromwell. But, however enduring he made the name, in one sense, he hardly helped to make it more common. The last Mr. Cromwell of the Protector's line died in the early part of the present century, and now the name is so rarely met with that Canon Cromwell had it all to himself last year in the London Post Office Directory.

The original family, however, as appears by one of the documents I am about to quote, claimed to have borne this surname even prior to the Conquest. Dugdale does not trace them back quite so far, but gives us a pretty full account of them from Ralph Cromwell, who, in the days of King John, took part with the rebellious barons, and who afterwards made his peace with the King by a fine of sixty marks and a palfrey, and by giving up his eldest daughter as a hostage, on the restitution of his forfeited lands. At this time the family did not rank among the nobility, but from the days of Edward II., the head of the house was always summoned to Parliament. The male line, however, went out in the person of Ralph Lord Cromwell, in the days of Henry VI., and the title, for a short time, rested with one of the family of Bourchier, after whose death it fell into abeyance.

To this Ralph Lord Cromwell just mentioned the two documents relate which we are about to lay before the reader. We are informed that he was appointed Treasurer of the Exchequer in the 11th year of King Henry VI.¹ Three years later he was retained to serve with one knight, twelve men-at-arms, and 175 archers, for the relief of Calais. On the death of the Duke of Bedford he was made master of the King's

¹ There is in the Public Record Office a document relating to him ten years earlier, in which there is also mention of a Sir William Cromwell, Knight, as living at the time. It is an indenture by Sir Ralph Cromwell, Knight, and six others, to Robert Lord Willoughby, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir William Boneville, Sir William Cromwell, Knights; Thomas

Burgess, Esq.; and William Thirlwall, demising to them for 40 years the manor of Brustwyke, and a number of other lands in Lincolnshire, in payment of the debts of Thomas, late duke of Clarence. Seven seals are attached, of which the first, that of Lord Cromwell, is in very good condition. It bears the device of a sheep lying under a bush and giving

mews and falcons, and an annuity of 40*l.* was granted to him out of the manor of Washingborough, in Lincolnshire. In the 17th of Henry VI., he obtained a licence for making the church of Tattershall, in Lincolnshire, collegiate, and to found a hospital near the churchyard. The works which he commenced upon the church were not completed at his death, sixteen years later; and in his will he directed his body to be buried in the middle of the quire, whenever the whole fabric should be rebuilt.² He also began the building of "a fair house at Colyweston in Com. Northampt., wherein he caused divers bags or purses to be cut on the stone-work of the chapel, and other places. Which house was afterwards finished by Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, mother to King Henry VII."³ In 23 Henry VI., he had a grant from the crown of the offices of constable and steward of Nottingham castle, and warden of Sherwood Forest. He died on the 4th of January, 1456, the year after the first blow was struck in the civil wars of the Roses.

The first of the two documents we here produce is a statement of the conditions on which Lord Cromwell consented to accept the rather uncomfortable post of Lord Treasurer, at a time when the revenues of the crown were considered to be totally inadequate to meet the charges upon them. This document is among what are called the Miscellaneous Rolls of Chancery, No. 364. The date must be the 11th year of Henry VI.

"To the Kyng oure Soverain Lord, with alle humblesse, shewe I your moost humble and trewe suget Rauf Cromwell, how that noght longe ago hit liked your Highnes, by the avise of my lords, your uncles of Bedford, of Gloucetre and the Cardinal,⁴ and of all the remenant of my lordes of your Counseill to charge me with occupacion of the office of the Tresorier of England, the which charge, in escwyng of the displesir and indignacion of your Highnes, I received under a . . . protestacion, that is to say, that y shuld mowe article certain requestes such as shuld be thought to me resonable and profitable to you, oure Soverain lord, and to your lande, and like with Goddes grace to kepe me and my pore astate and worship unblemisshed; the said articles to be tendrely herd, sped, and executed, as reson wold; the which requestes I, folwing my said protestacion have putte in writyng, swych as swith:—

"First, that hit like your Highness to considre that howe be hit that as well in tymes of your noble progenitours as in your owen tyme thestate and necessite of the kyng regnyng for the tyme and of the reaume have ben notified to the thre astates of the londe assemblyd in Parleментz, and in especial nowe in this your present Parlement, and clerly shewed and declared in this same Parlement that all the revenuz and profitz ordinarie and extraordinarie, certayn or casuell, that growth to you on eny behalf suffisith not to the birdon and assiething of your ordinarie

suck to a lamb; over which is the motto,
"Vous me teigne." It is here figured:—

² Dugdale. 45, 46. Nicolas' Testa-
menta Vetusta, p. 276.

³ Dugdale.

⁴ Beaufort.



yeerly charges by the somme of xxxml. li. a yeer and more. Nevirtheles the said declaracion nys nought as yitte so conceived by the lordes of your lande, ne be the commune that thei can yeve ful faith and credence therto. And therfor to thentente to putte the said lordes and commune in ful conceit and knowelech of the said matier and oute of all scrupill and doute therin, plese hit you to make my said lordes to yeve a leisir to the sight and diligent examinacion of certein bokes and recordes of your eschequier made by your sworn officers of the same place, by the which they shal mowe clierly undirstande and conceive thestate of your lande as nowe and the charges and necessitees that risteth uppon you and your reume. And that so knownen to commaunde the saide astate so shewid, swich as hit was at that tyme that I received my said charge and yit is, to be enacted of recorde. And ovir this to ordeine swich labour and diligence to be done that in this Parlement provision of good be made, swich as shal nede, for the keping of your noble astate and household, for the governaile of your lande inwardes, for defence of your land ageins your enemyes outward, and for other evident charges that rest uppon you, and for the paiement of your dettis, withouten the which thinges doon and pourveied I neither can, may, ne dare take uppon me to labour forthe or procede in occupacion of the said office, considering that withoute this I neithir shal mowe plese your Hyness ne do to you agreable service, as y desire with all myn herte to do, ne contente your sugettes, ne save my pouere name, fame and worship.

"Also that hit please your Highnesse to ordeine that hit be yeven me in commaundement that in payement and departynges oute of your revenue y preferre your household, your warderobe and your necessarie werkes. And that hit be agreed and graunted me be my said lordes that y so doying shal nought therfor renne in to displesaunce or indignacion of eny of hem.

"Also that hit be ordeined and appointed that no yeft ne graunte of lyfelode revenue or good belangyng to your Hynesse, ne paymente to be made of your good be appointed or passed by your counseil withoute that the Tresorier be called to yeve enformacion in swich caas to your counsail, and be first herde therappon. Considering that for lakke of such information your counsail hath ben disceived, and ye hirt afore this, aswell in your owen good as in lakke of avayle that myght have growen to you.

"Also that hit like your Highness to graunte me that for the tyme that hit shal plese you that y occupie the said office I shal occupie hit as frely with all the manere of preminences and duytees belangyng therto, withouten eny diminucion or restraynte, as eny Tresorier of England hath occupied hit afore this tyme, and that my said lordes promytte your Hynesse that they shal supporte me in the occupacion of the said office, and nought suffre me, as fer forth as in thaym shal be, to be distourbed or letted in the freedom of occupacion therof, ne conceive ageins me eny indignacion or maugre therfor."

The incident to which the next document relates must be viewed in connection with the numerous symptoms of disaffection to the government in the reign of Henry VI. Lord Cromwell, as we learn from William of Worcester, had been one of the principal enemies of Henry's favourite minister, the Duke of Suffolk, and had been mainly instrumental

in procuring his impeachment by the Commons in the beginning of the year 1450. It would seem that he hated Suffolk, and was hated in return. A little before the preceding Christmas one of Suffolk's chief supporters, by name William Tailboys, had laid a number of men in wait for him at the door of the Star Chamber, while Cromwell was attending a meeting of the King's council, and he narrowly escaped with his life. Upon what part he took in politics after Suffolk's murder, we will not venture to pronounce an opinion. In that year occurred Cade's rebellion, immediately after which the Duke of York came over from Ireland, and for a time disputed the rule with the Duke of Somerset; but Somerset enjoyed the favour of the Court, and York withdrew again into retirement until the beginning of the year 1452, when, owing to the loss of Guienne and Gascony, in addition to Normandy, he made another attempt to remove his rival from power. He marched up to London at the head of his retainers, and, finding the city closed against him, crossed the Thames at Kingston and proceeded into Kent, whither he was followed by the King in person with another army. But matters were accommodated for the time, and the Duke disbanded his forces, and took an oath of allegiance to the King.

For this demonstration that he had made against the King—or rather against the King's favourite minister, Somerset—the Duke of York was pardoned. But very shortly after, as we learn from a MS. in the Cottonian Collection,⁵ the Earl of Shrewsbury and others “rode into Kent, and set up five pair of gallows, and did execution upon John Wylkyns, taken and brought to the town as for captain, and with other mo, of the which eight-and-twenty were hanged and beheaded; the which heads were sent to London. And London said there should no mo heads be set up on there.” These men apparently had taken part with the Duke. The treason of John Wylkyns, at least, as appears by the following document, was alleged to have been committed at Dartford, in Kent, the very place where York had appeared in arms just before his submission. Wylkyns, we find, was executed on the 28th of June, 1452 (the eve of St. Peter and Paul). He was dragged on a hurdle from the Tower to Dartford, and hanged on the scene of his treason. Shortly afterwards a priest, named Robert Colynson, accused Lord Cromwell of disloyalty on the ground of certain statements which Wylkyns, as he alleged, had made to himself in confession before he suffered. This accusation elicited from Cromwell a declaration of his innocence before the King's council, together with an examination into the priest's antecedents, which certainly appears to have destroyed altogether the value of his evidence. Cromwell was completely acquitted. The priest was committed to prison, but seems scarcely to have been punished to the satisfaction of him whom he had injured; for in the middle of the following year (seventeen months after his declaration before the Council,) Lord Cromwell petitioned that his imprisonment might be continued until he had made him satisfaction for the injury. Apparently Colynson had been protected by powerful friends, and it seems that he was encouraged to accuse a good many persons besides Cromwell; but in 1455, after the first battle of St. Albans, when the Duke of York obtained the rule, he was obliged to change his policy. He then offered to confess by

⁵ Cott. Roll. II. 23. Quoted in my Introduction to the Paston Letters, p. cxlviii.

whom he had been instigated to make these accusations, provided he was assured of his life.⁶

We will now lay before the reader the full text of the statement presented to the King by Lord Cromwell in his own exculpation, and accepted by Henry in council. It is enrolled on the Patent Roll of 31 Henry VI. part ii. m. 16 :—

*"Exemplificatio
de declarationis Radulphi
Cromwell.*) Rex omnibus ad quos, &c., salutem. In-
speximus tenorem cujusdam actus de et super
quadam declaratione quam dilectus et fidelis
noster Radulphus Cromwell miles coram nobis et consilio nostro nuper
fecit, in eodem consilio facti, nobis in Cancellaria nostra de mandato nostro
missum in hæc verba :—

"The first day of Feverer the yere of the regne of Kyng Henry the Sixte xxxj at Westminster in the Sterred Chambre, beyng ther present the lordes,—Bysshop Cardinall Archebysshop of Caunterbury and Chauncellre of England, Tharchebisshop of York, The Bysshopes of Ely and Hereford, The Dean of Seynt Severyns of Burdeaux, the Duc of Somersett, Therle of Worcestre, Tresorer of England, the Viscount Lysle, the Pryour of Saynt Johns, the lordes Wylughby, Moleyns and Stourton, and Sir Thomas Tirell, knyght, the juges of that one Bench and of that other, the Chief Baron of theschequier, the Kynges Sargeantes and the Kynges Attorney : It was reherced and opened by my sayd lord Chaunceller how that the Kyng hadde sent unto him and late him wite that where the lord Cromwell hadde sewed mekely unto his Highnesse to come to his declaracion upon suche matiers as but late ago were leyd upon hym by a preest, The Kyng, for grete and evident causes such as moeved his Highnesse, thought reson wold that the said lord Cromwell shuld be admitted to declare himself in and upon the said matiers ; therfore the Kyng wold that my said lord Chaunceller, with the remenaunt of the lordes of his counsail thanne beyng present, shuld calle by fore thaym the said lord Cromwell, to hieie all that he coude and wold say for his said declaracion in that byhalfe.

"Soo furthwith by thavice and assent of all the seyd lordes of the Kynges Counsail the said lord Cromwell was sent fore, and at his comyng the Kynges entent abovesaid was shewed and opend unto him by the mouth of my said lord Chauncellor. Where to the said lord Cromwell answered and saide he hadd well understand the Kynges will was such as my lord Cardinal had reherced unto him, wherof he thankyd the Kynges good grace as humble as he coude, and the lordes also that it plesed to dispose thaym to here him. After this he said that his ancetres, such as he was descended of, have been at all tymes trewe and faythfull ligemen to thair souverain lord for the tyme beyng withoute any blemmysshe or defoylyng of thaire name or worship. He also himself trusted to God hath kept his trouth, faith and ligeaunce to his sovereign lord as deuly and trewly as ever did subgitte to his power. He sayd also that he had served the noble prince and duc of Claraunce xiiij yere, and also the fader of our souverain lord (whoos soule God assoile) vij yere, and after that hath now be in the service of oure sovereign lord that now is as counsailler and some tyme officer by the space of xxx^{ti}

⁶ Paston Letters (Ed. 1872) vol. i. p. 344.

winter and more withoute that ever anything of untrouth or of reproche were leyde upon him ; but that now late, as he seyde, oon calling him self Robert Colynson a fals preste stirred by the Fende liste to saie and lye upon him by way of sclaunder certayne heynouse and grevous matiers that he shold have contrived and doon ayenst thastate and welfare of oure said souverain lord. The which matiers the said preste shuld saie that he hadd thaim of one John Wylkyns late ataynte of hys treason and now dede, by way of confession, whan he laye upon the herdell, to be executed for high treason but late agoo at Dertford in the shyre of Kent. The which matiers and sayinges of the said preest the said lord Cromwell saide were fals, untrew, and oonly proceded of malice and of fals groundes and ymaginacions ; for, as God knowith and all the saintis of Hevyn, and as he shalbe saved afore the universal Juge, where as all men shalbe juged, he never did, saide, purposed, or thought such thynges as the seyde fals preest sclaundered him with, nor never willed nor did any thyng that shold in any wise soun or be ayenst the trouthe and ligeaunce that he oweth to oure souverain lord. And if he shold have doon any other wyse, he hadd been the unkyndest creature that ever was born, considering that the Kyng hath be unto him as good and gracious souverain lord as ever was prince to subgitte, soo that the said lord Cromwell thought, as he saide, that by his faith and ligeaunce that he oweth to his souverain lord, he is not only bound to desire and by all menes to him possible procure all that that myght be to the welfare of his souverain lord, but also his good grace and manyfold benyfettes constrayneth him to love and worship the Kyng above all erthely creatures, as he hath do, dothe and ever shall as long as he shall lyve.

" And that the matiers leyde upon him by the forsaid preste been fals and untrew, he said he was redye to acquite him by all meanes possible to him as a trewe man, notwithstanding the falsnes of them and of the seyde preste been open at eighe ; for as above is rehersed the knowlache that the preest saide he hadd of the sayde matiers was grounded upon that that he shold have be confessoure to that greet traitour, John Wylkyns, at the tyme of his deth, and that he lying upon the herdill towards his deth at Dertford shuld have confessed the seyde matiers to the forsaid preest. The which the seyde lord Cromwell saide was fals, forsomuch as the seyde preest was nat, fro that tyme that the seyde Wylkyns was hadd fro the Towre of London till he was ded, confessoure unto him, nor herd no such matiers opened by him in anywise ; for trouthe is that at such tyme as the seyde Wylkyns departed fro the Towre as above, he hadd continually with him in the bote and till he come to Dertford another preest to here his confession, and the vicarie of Dertford, at such tyme as the seyde Wylkyns was leyde on the herdill, asked of the Kynges officers there beyng present whether he was confessed ; which officers answered that he had had with him a confessor alle that daie afore, and the seyde vicarie saide that the saide Wylkyns had no wordes of accusacions or disclaundre of any man at that tyme or sethens afore his deth.

" Moreover the seyde lord Cromwell saide that Richard Lyndesey, squier, William Worth, John Styver, John Yong and Richard Bagshawe saien that they were present at Dertford fro the tyme that the seyde Wylkyns was leyde on the herdell till he was dede and herd all that he seide in the mene tyme, and he had never word sownnyng to disclandre or accusacion

of any persone, and all that ever he spake in that tyme he seide it openly and was not confessed nor spake with no man apart or prevely ; in proef of the which vicarie of Dertford, Richard Lyndesey, William Worth, John Stryver, John Yong and Richard Bagshawe abovesaid, saying, the said lord Cromwell brought forth and exhibit an instrument wherof the tenure foloweth :—

“In Dei nomine, amen. Per præsens publicum instrumentum cunctis appareat evidenter quod anno Domini Millesimo quadringentesimo quinquagesimo secundo, Indictione prima, pontificatus Sanctissimi in Christo patris et domini nostri, domini Nicholai Divina providencia Papæ Quinti anno sexto, mensis Octobris die ultima, In quadam alta camera infra hospiciū vocatum le Hert infra villam de Dertford, Roffensis diocesis, scituata, in mei notarii publici et testium subscriptorum præsencia personaliter constitutus, venerabilis vir magister Johannes Horley, perpetuus vicarius ecclesiæ parochialis de Dertford prædict', dixit et declaravit tunc ibidem qualiter, in vigilia Apostolorum Petri et Pauli ultimo præterita, quidam Johannes Wylkyns, de et super crimine læsæ majestatis convictus et dampnatus, ductus erat a Turri London' usque ad dictam villam de Dertford, et in eadem villa de Dertford, in publica via regali, juxta ecclesiam parochialem de Dertford prædicta, officarii domini Regis ibidem tunc præsentes posuerunt eum super le hurdill ad trahendum eundem Johannem Wylkyns ad furcas extra eandem villam mortis executioni tradendum. Et tunc dictus magister Johannes Horley vicarius accessit ad quendam nuncupatum Joskyns servientem domini nostri Regis, et petiit ab eo an necesse erat ut idem Johannes Wylkyns ab eodem vicario confiteretur, et idem Joskyns eidem vicario respondebat quod non erat necessarium, pro eo quod idem Wylkyns quasi per totum illum diem ad tunc habuit secum unum presbyterum confessorem per eum electum, a quo confessus fuit ; et sic dictus magister Johannes Horley vicarius prædictus non vidit aliquem confitentem eundem, neque aliqua verba accusatoria aut in detectionem sive infamationem alicujus sonantia ab eodem Johanne Wylkyns ad tunc, neque citra, nec umquam alias, ut dicit, audivit. Præsentibus tunc ibidem Ricardo Broynne, armigero, Johanne Peck, generoso, et Willelmo Worth, literato, testibus ad præmissa. Consequenterque Anno Domini, Indictione et pontificatu prædictis, In mei etiam notarii publici subscripti et testium infrascriptorum præsencia in cimiterio ecclesiæ parochiæ de Dertford prædicta, primo die mensis Novembris, Ricardus Lyndesey armiger, et in alta camera infra hospiciū vocatum le Hert prædict' Willelmus Worth, Johannes Styver, Johannes Yong et Ricardus Bagshawe eodem primo die Novembris personaliter constituti, dixerunt et declaraverunt, et eorum quilibet in animam suam, et per se divisim, dixit et declaravit, qualiter præsentes fuerunt et eorum quilibet præsens fuit in villa de Dertford prædicta in dicta vigilia Apostolorum Petri et Pauli Anno Domini supradicto, quando dictus Johannes Wylkyns, ut præfertur, a Turri London' ad dictam villam de Dertford ductus et positus erat super le hurdell trahendus ad furcas. Et erant, ac eorum quilibet erat, continue in præsencia dicti Johannis Wylkyns proditoris usque ad exitum spiritus sui de corpore, et audiverunt, ac eorum quilibet audivit, verba quæ dictus Johannes Wylkyns proditor tempore illo locutus fuit, et non audiverunt, nec eorum aliquis audivit, aliqua verba accusatoria, detectoria sive diffamatoria nec in accusationem, detectionem, sive infamationem alicujus sonantia. Et dictus Johannes Wylkyns pro-

ditor illa quæ tempore illo locutus fuit, illa omnia publica ac alta et intelligibili voce dixit et publicavit, nihil in secretis locutus est, nec alicui ibidem confitebatur, nec aliquem ad secretum suum audiendum, seu secreta sua audienda ad se vocavit, sed expresse secreta et clandestina colloquia refutavit, sed rogavit omnes astantes orare Deum pro eo, ut asseruerunt. Acta sunt hæc prout suprascriptum et recitantur sub Anno Domini, Indictione, Pontificatu, mense, diebus et locis prædictis. Præsentibus tunc ibidem discretis viris, Ricardo Broynne, armigero, et Johanne Pecke, generoso, testibus ad præmissa.

“Et ego Johannes Naseby, clericus, Lincolnensis diocesis, publicus auctoritatibus Apostolica et Imperiali notarius, præmissis omnibus et singulis dum sic, ut præmittitur, sub anno Domini, Indictione, Pontificatu, mensibus, diebus et locis prædictis agerentur et fierent, una cum præuominatis testibus præsens personaliter interfui, eaque omnia et singula sic fieri vidi et audiui, aliundeque occupatus per alium scribi feci, publicavi et in hanc publicam formam redegi, meisque nomine et signo solitis et consuetis signavi rogatus et requisitus in fidem et testimonium omnium et singulorum præmissorum. Et constat mihi, notario prædicto, de rasura hujus dictionis *Roffen* in tertia linea a capite præsentis instrumenti computanda, facta, et interlineatione hujus dictionis *verba* in præsentis instrumento, quæ approbo ego notarius antedictus.

“By the which thinge abovesaide the sayd lord Cromwell seide he trust to God that my sayd lordes of the Councell understode well his innocence in the matiers above reherced, and howe that they were fals and untrew. And over this for the more prove of the falsnes and untrouth of the seyd matiers he referreth and remittith him to divers thynges conteigned in a bille the which he had made and conceived to the Kynge oure Souverain Lorde, where of the tenure is suche as folowyth :—

“TO THE KYNGE OURE MOST DRADE SOUVERAIN LORDE.

“Besechith humbly your Highnesse youre trewe legeman Rauf Cromwell that it woll please you to be remembred and conside that all his auncestres before him beyng within this youre reaume and berynge the same name, as well before the Conquest of this youre reaume as at all tymes sith, have been trewe legemen unto youre full noble progenitours, kynges of this youre reaume and all wey undefoyled and unblemesshed, and soo at all tymes by theym taken, hadde and understande ; and how that youre seyd besecher was contynuyng in the service of that noble prince the Duc of Clarence youre uncle xiiij yere, and after that in the service of the most high and myghty prince the Kynge youre fader, whom God pardonne, vij yere, and now in youre service xxx^{ti} wynter and more ; duryng the which tyme he hath been trewe liegeman to the Kynge your fader and to you his souverain lorde, and is, shall and woll be, as longe as his lif shall endure, as therin he reporteth him to God above that knowith all, and to youre moost noble rightwynnesse, of all his trewe service afore this ; and in which tyme he hath spent his yought and goodes in such service as diligently and trewly as he couthe, as he also reporteth him to all youre faithfull and trewe liegemen ; And moreover that it woll lyke your said Highnesse to conside howe that a false preste callynge him self Sir Robert Colynson, of his malice, untrew ymaginacioun and fals conjecture, hath falsly sclaudered youre sayd besecher, aswell to youre owne persone as in his open predicacions in

parisshchirches, affermyng certaine langage that shold have been seide in confession to him, as he seith, by oon John Wilkyns the tyme of his deth, late attainted of high treason, and acordynge to youre lawes as a traitour, and as he well deservid, by jugement in Kent drawen, hangid and quartered. And youre said besecher, knowynge his own trouthe, and himself to be giltlesse and in noo wise defectif of the seid sclaunderous matiers, trusteth in Goddes grete rightwesnesse that he hath put in youre mynd, high discrecion and undersrtandyng, that it is untrewre all that the forsayd fals preest hath seide of him for divers causes and consideracions. Oone is for it may be credibly preved that the said preste spake not with the said Wylkyns tyme of his deth in confessioun, but openly that all that were by might here, where he utred at that tyme none such langage. And if the seyd preest had herd any such langage as he spekith of, it had been his deutee to have comen unto your highnesse to have yeven you informacion forthwith, which he did not till he was empeched to your Highnesse a moneth after, and therupon then arrested and soo constreyned to come unto you ; which previth well that he did hit not for the trouthe, zele and love that he aught to the wel of you, souverain lord, but rather for his sonner excuse of that thing that was put upon him. And more over your seyd besecher understandeth that the Prior of Seint Johns and other lordes, by your royall commaundement examined the seyd Wilkyns in youre Towre of London, whoos answer and confession is put in writtyng, to the which he reporteth him yf any thinge Wylkyns seide touching him at that tyme. Also youre said besecher is enfourmed that the same preest and a servant sume tyme to Sharpe nowe late sittynge togedre in companye, fell in travers and langage of adventure ; which servant knewe him before and seide to him "Thou art fals and untrewre, and cursedly disposed ; for I have herd the divers tymes when thou hast seyde unto Sherp, 'Sette on and make an ende. Thou shalt have help ynough, and I wote where to cheviss for the mⁱ. li. yf thou have nede. And this I will preve and make it good.'" On the which consideracions and many other which came and may be leide ayein the seid preest, as it shalbe shewde in nother bille when it shall like your Highnesse to commaunde, woll prefe him to be of noo such sadnesse, demeanyng, trouthe nor substaunce that any credence oweth to be yeven unto him of right. And how be it that youre seyd besecher was never gladde to reporte the misgouvernaunce and incontinent lif of any persone, yet in declaracion of his trouthe he is at this tyme cohorted and compelled to enfourme youre Highnesse that the seyd Sir Robert Colynson is and long tyme hath been openly knowen a misgouverned persone ; for the which misgouvernaunce and incontinent lif not prestely and diverse sedicious and erroneous sermones by him preched within the universite of Caumbrigge he was bannessed. Also he fledd and stale awaie out of diverse other countrees and citees of this youre reaume for such semblable erronious gouvernance and cedicious sermones that he hath made ayenst youre high and noble astate, and also for the unprestly and unvertuous livinge as he was often take with, for fere of the correccion and punicion of the which ; wherof the trouthe shalbe knowen yf it please your Highnesse to commaunde the Reverent fader in God Cardinall and Archiebisshop of Caunterbury, youre Chaunceller of this youre reaume and to th'archiebisshop of York, or to summe other as it shall please your Highnesse to examyne,

enquere and take dewe proof of all this aforesaide. Which premisses and circumstaunces touchyng the same by youre greet rightwysnesse duely considered, youre sayd besecher louly desireth and besecheth you that he of the seyde disclaunders and noyses may be declared giltles, and so by youre Highnesse accepted, hadde and reputed at all tymes and in all such places as shalbe thought to him behovefull. Considering, Souverain Lorde, in youre high wisdom, not only the premisses but also the matier in dede whether any liklyhod hath been in anywyse apperant towards such conclusion as the seyde disclaunder towcheth or concerneth. In which sclaunder and many other matiers youre servant hath been oftetyms like to have been hurte, had not ben the verray rightwysnesse and stedfastnesse which your Highnesse hath not onoly shewed to him but also to all youre servantis in thaire adversitees; which of verray reason must cause and byndeth him and them to doo the more diligent service unto you. For the which youre stedfast rightwysnesse and gracious benygne faver shewed unto him at all tymes he besecheth that blessed lorde the High Juge of Heven there to thank and recompense you and sende him grace to doo you such service as shall please you here after, and that he may see you, his verray naturell souverain lord, to have the victorie of all youre ennemyes.

"Be side all this the sayde lorde Cromwell seide it was to be considered what maner of man and of what name and fame the seyde fals preest callynge himself Robert Colynson was of, and howe disclaunderous cedious' and perillious persone, and what life he hadde be of, the which the seid lord Cromwell seide he was ryght loth to reherce or open, save that verray necessite compelleth him soo to doo for declarynge of himself. Where for he exhibit to my sayd lordes diverse articles in writtyng of the straunge, ungodly and ungoddly conversacion, demeanyng and lyving of the seid preest, by the which, he seide, every man of discrecion myght well understande what faith or credence oweth to be yeven to the sayinge of so misruld a persone, the which articules been such as folowyth :—

"It is to remembre that oon Robert Colynsone preest, so callynge him self, hath seyde to the Kyng oure Souverain Lord that he was confessour to oon called Wylkyns late hanged in Kent, the which sholde telle him in confession certaine thinges that the lorde Cromwell shold be prevy and assented unto, and that the seyde preest was never confessoure to the seyde Wylkyns there is wytnesse and proves sufficiaunt, and also of his unpreestly demeanyng and other misgouvernaunce, which the seid lord Cromwell is not gladde to utter of him, ne of noon other man, but that of veray necessite in declaracion of his owen trouth compelled to doo.

"First, the said Wilkyns desired of oon Cobbe thanne beyng undersheriff of Kent to gete him a confessour. The said undershirriff entreted and hired the parson of the Towre, the which parson went with the said Wylkyns by water and confessed him in the water, and seide to him alle that he couthe saye; and moo confessours hadde he nat, he never was more confessed to his dying, as it may be sufficiauntly proved by his divers wytnesse which went with him to the place of his execucion.

"Item, as for the conversacion of the seyde Sir Robert Colynson, it hath not ben worshipfull ne vertuous, but to noysefull and disclaunderous, with so many vices it is mervaille to witt, in his owne lyvyng full vicious in

delaumes of his owne body in his preching, and in all his communications and condicions, as it is well knowen through the most parte of this lande, &c.

"Item, it is well kuowen and of recorde in the universite of Caumbrigge, as it is seide, that for his cedicious preching and langage and his horrible leving, which is to noyfful and shamefull to reherce, he was banysshed oute of the seyde universitee of Caumbrigge, as it may well and sufficiauntly be proved, &c.

"Item, at Norwich, conversaunt for a tyme what rule he was of there, it is well known both of his viciousnesse of his body and of other ribaldrye and delaumes of his langage allwaie by him continued in audience of the people, as well as in his cedicious and malicious preching, which was likely to have caused over grete rumoure among the people there, had not certeine clerkys taken sonner hede unto him ; for the which he was ascited to come be fore the vikare generall to answere to his preching and langage, as the same vikare generall, and also the iiij ordres of Freres can reporte, as it is seide, if they be commaunded.

"Item, the said preest an other tyme, beyng in Yorkshire, did many heynous thynges, as well in prechyng there as in other viciousnesse of his body and condicions and perillous example of his owen living was aspied by Mayster Thomas Tanfeld, which Mayster Thomas purposing to have brought him before the ordinarie to have corrected him as well for his cedicious preching as for his unpreestly lyvinge ; and in the menetye he stale away, as the seyde Mayster Thomas canne declare himself, and as it is well known to many in the seyde shire, as well lordes as other, &c.

"Item, the seyde preste in the diocese of Chestre was benyficed, and there came to diverse priours, sayinge to theym they were ascited to the court of Rome, which he hadde to shewe, and that they shold appiere by a certaine day, at which day it was impossible for theym to be there, he sayinge thanne to theym, 'Yf ye will yeve me for my travaile I shall ese you.' The seyde priours beyng gladde to be eased graunted him good. And of his demeanyng further tharchebisshop of Yorke canne declare and his lordship be demaunded, &c.

"Item, the said preest dwellid in Seint Albons, and there hield a mannis wif whiche he called his suster, for the which on a tyme of his malicious disposition, ymaginyng the deth of her husbonde fayned a lettre adressed to the seid husbond and delivered it to him ; the seid husbonde, demyng noon harme, toke and redde the lettre ; and the seid preest, purposing to execute his seid malicious purpose, drough his knife and stroke the seid husbond as he redde the seid lettre ; and the seid preest supposing he hadde slayn the seid husbond, for drede of his life fledde away, as it is well k[n]owen, in the seid town of Seint Albons, as the constable and Edmunde Westby hundredarie, and other men of good reputacion canne reporte.

"Item, that where all the Juges of this lande compleynid to the Kynges Highnesse of such riottes and affrayinges of his people in open sessions by fore theym there as they hadde been, &c. ; at which tyme the two chief Juges specially compleyned of the seid preest for the mysrule and cedicious langage that he hadde whan that he was at Henley atte a speciall assise by fore the seid two chieff juges assigned by twene the duchesse of Suffolk on that oon partie and Sir John Wenlok and

Baramtyn on that other partye. In so much through his stiring and provokynge the people there thanne assembled to riotte with his cedicious and perillous langage he was in pointe to have caused over much manslaughter; for the which the seyde two chief Juges specially desired of the Kynges highnesse that the same preest for the seid gouvernance that he was of he might be committed to warde, as it may be reported to the seid two chief Juges; and of his demeanyng further the same tyme.

"Item, the seid preest but late came erly in a mornyng to a taverne in Southwerk which the women of the stewes customably hauntith, and there beyng a litel boy of xj yere of age, which the preest toke in his armes griping him so sore that the child cried, for that him thought he brak his bak with his fast holdyng, and there kiste him many tymes as it hadde been a woman, soo at the laste the litill boy cryed sore; and thanne he left his holde and asked yf there were any woman, for he wolde fayne have a woman, and to gyve the boy for his labour. This meane tyme come in to the seid taverne Leventhorpe, marshall of the Kynges Bench, sayinge, 'Sir,' to the preest, 'why drink ye thus erly?' The preest answered sayinge, 'I have seide masse at Seynt Magnes, and I am soo drye that I note what to doo.' Thenne seid Leventhorpe, 'Was there no tavern ner Seynt Magnes thanne this?' And he seyde ageyn that he was wonte to drynk there, and the circumstance hereof further the seid Leventhorpe can telle more largely yf he be desired.

"Item, the seid preest hadde a chaunterie at the pariss churche beside Crystchurche, and howe he was demeaned there with wommen and specially with a yong maydon it is over straunge to declare openly howe horribly he did, as it [is] well knownen in the seid pariss, as the lorde Camoys and Maister William Wytham, which was present at takyng of the ex-aminacion of the matier, can reporte yf they be required.

"Item, the seide preest at Leycestre, in the Bisshoppes tyme of Lincoln^e that died last, preched perillous matier openly, and not onely that but much other langage a yens the Kynges astate right straunge, for the which Maister William Wytham, than Chauncellor with the seyde Bisshop, sought and gart seke for him all the diocise to have put him to punicion for the seyde perillous matier which sounded erronious, like as the lawe of the Chirche had required, and as the seid Maister William can furthermore declare in that matier &c.

"Item, the seid preest beyng in the Courte of Rome knewe where was a chanon of Gysborn in Cleveland in the diocese of Yorke, than beyng syke at Rome, and had money in the banke, came to him saying muche disceyving langage to have the money fro the chanon, saying he wold spede his matiers in the Courte; soo at the last he gate the chanons moneye by endenture. The channon beyng seke, the preest supposing he shold not lyve, spended his money. The chanon recovered and asked his moneye. The seid preest denied that he evere hadd of him any money, his endenture notwithstanding, and other grete witnesse beyng present at the delyveraunce of the money to the seid preest. The seid chanon for hevynesse of his moneye felle seke ageyn, and then desired the lorde Camois of help. The seid lorde spake to the preest for the

⁸ Marmaduke Lumley, who died in 1451.

seid money and he denide that eny hadd. Thenne the seid preest, seing this, ascited the said chanon for another matier to appere afore the audience of the Chambre. The chanon appered, the lord Camoys being present. The preest seyng that supposed they wold have spoken of the money, fledde away and nevere was seyen in the Courte after, &c., as it is seide.

"Item, at Newe Castell up on Tyne the seid preest was of such demeanynge and governaunce that all the people was sore sett ageyns him, and had not the help be of a gentilman i-called Robert Rodes, which of pitee gate him prevely away be boot, supposing he hadd been of better and more preestly condicion than was preved upon him there att that tyme; for all the Religious of that towne by cause of his perillous and cedicious sermones hadd required the maire there to have keped him in hold to such tyme as they might article ageyns him accordyng to the lawe, where he sholde have be punisshed if he had not so stollen away.

"Item, the cedicious sermones, mysgouvernance and unpreestly lyvynge within Notyngham towne and in the shire there aboute Maister Gulle, doctour of divinite, can reporte yf he be examined.

"Item, the seide preste receyved v. marke of the Abbes of Berkyng, takyng upon him to goo to Rome and to doo certeyne masses at Scala Celi; which money soo taken he disceyvably voyded fro hir, and neyther went forth accordyng to his promisse nor deliverd her ageyn here money; and not oonly the seyde Abbessse but also many other diverse persones in that countrey under the same fourme unpreestly hath disceyved.

"Item, the lady Roos,⁹ modir to Sir Philip Wentworth knyght, is not unremembered of the disceyte that the same preest did till her, and the rule, demeanyng and gouvernance of him also in the countrey ther aboute her.

"Item, what sclaunderous langage the same preest uttred of the Kynges hous in his open predicacion att Norwych the xxvjth yere of [the] regne of the Kyng oure souverain lorde that now is, the lady Morley¹ and the moste parte of the cite of Norwich couthe remembre if they were required, as it is supposed.

"Item, the same preest, a lytill before the yere of Grace,² shewed in diverse places a copy of a bull, as he seide, newe sent from the Pope, callyng himself the Popes cubiculer, in which was contrived howe that the Pope charged all abbotes and priours, abbesses and priouresses, and all other presidentes in religions, both men and women, that noon of hem upon payne of cursing shuld lette any of theire subgettes to goo to Rome duryng the tyme of Grace, and also that the Pope gave power in the seid bulle to everich of the seid subgettes letted by theire souveraines so to goo, to cyte and sommond thaire souveraines and presidentes to appere att Rome at a certeyn day, wherthrough many religious persones of men and wommen were leten oute in apostacie ageyns the will of theire souverains, as it shalbe openly proved whan the cause requireth.

"Item, the seid preest, in the tyme of the parlement last holden at

⁹ Margery, widow of John, Lord Roos, who was slain at the battle of Bauge, in 1421, married afterwards Roger Wentworth.

¹ Isabel, widow of Thomas lord Morley, who died in 1435. She was the

daughter of Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, the unpopular minister of Richard II.

² The year 1450 was a year of jubilee, when special indulgences were granted to those visiting Rome.

Leycestre,³ come to the abbey of Swyne in the diocese of York, saying to the prioresse and the covent that my lord Cardinall sent him to theym fro Leycestre to teche theim and preech theym as well in theire chapitill hous within theim self as to the people in the parish chirch; at the which tyme he labored so sore to the power Nonnes, till he had getyn of everich of them xij^d. save of one that coude geet but viij^d. to geve him; and soo he had there xxs. viij^d. to gete everich of theim at Rome absolucion *a pena et culpa*. In the witnesse whereof the common seall of the seid hous may be had, as it is seide, yf nede be; and like wise he served many pouere houses of religion of men and women, as well in that diocese as other.

"Item, as it is seide the same preest gate be sotelte of a woman dwelling at the same tyme in Hedon in Holderuesse a greet somme of money, which she had gotten hir all hir live and kept to bye therwith a livery in an abbey, undertakyng to the seid woman that hir soule shold never come in payne from that he had saide a masse at Scala Celi.

"Item, the seid preest, amonge other many unclene condicions and dishonest werkis openly k[n]owen and seide of him in many places of this reume, toke on a tyme oon called Megg Phelip, the which was in Yorke a comen woman, and when he hadde used hir there as he wold he carried hir with him in to Blakamore, and there ledd hir aboute and kept here as longe as him liked; and for more speciall knowelach and proof to be had of thes and many other, and howe and in what place of this reume the seid preest ungoddly demeaned him, as well by false dissimilacion and sotelte in getyng greet good of people as by unclene and dishonest demeanyng of him self, lete every bisshop in his diocese make due inquisition through citees and townes, abbeys and priories. And soo all these above seide and specialtees⁴ of theym shalbe founde trewe, with many other untrowthes and uncleunnesse, dishonest to be named, &c.

"All thees thinges soo doon, declared and red, the seid lorde Cromwell besought and required that my lorde Priour of Saint Johns, beyng there present as above, the which by the Kynges commaundement with other examined the seid Wylkyns in the Toure of London, wold seie and declare whether he at that tyme seide any thing of the seid lorde Cromwell, or whether he laide any charge upon him. Wherto my said lorde the Priour of Saint Johns answerd and seide, trouth it was that by the Kinges commaundement he was ij tymes with the seid Wylkyns at the seid Towre; oonys with my lorde of Shrovesbury, a nother tyme he had with him Maister Robert Kent. And the saying of the seid Wylkyns was put in wryting, as it may [appear]; but he spake noo worde of the lorde Cromwell. Than forthwith the said lorde Cromwell praide and required my lorde Moleyns beyng also there present, as above, that he wold reherce and saie whether he ever herd the seid Wylkyns saye any thing to the charge of the seid lorde Cromwell. To the which request my said lord Moleyns answeryng seide he was at Dertford with my lorde of Shrovesbury at such tyme as the seid Wylkyns with other was convict, defoyled and dampued upon high treason, and at such tyme as the seid Wylkyns saugh other drawe to execucion, himself knowyng nor wenyng

³ A Parliament was held at Leicester in the spring of 1450.

⁴ *Sp'ualtees*, MS., which commonly

stands for *spiritualtees*; but the scribe ought clearly to have written *sp'ialtees*.

noon other, but that he shold also furthwith have be executed ; and thaugh it so were that he charged some other, yet of the lorde Cromwell spake he noo worde. After this the seid lord Cromwell directynge his wordes oonly to my lorde Cardinall saide, 'Sir, ye be the lorde that oonly I see sitte here that was at such tyme of this counsaile, whanne I firste come there to ; and ye have knowe me and my demeanyng fro that tyme hedir more thanne any other lorde now beynge here present. I praye you, beseche you, and also require you, that ye woll saie whether ye have conceyved in me that I shold have be such a maner of man as is above reherced, or whether I have hadd myself untrewly or ungoodly to my souverain lorde.' Wherto my seid lord Cardinall answered saying, 'Sir, sooth it is that I have knowe you longe agoo and sete many yerres with you in this counsaile ; and as for such thinges as ye aske and demaunde of me, trusteth me trewly, and I had hadd knowlache of any such thinges I shold not have spared to have opened thaim to the Kyng, but for soothe I knowe noon such.'

"After the which declaracion soo made to my said lordes of the Kynges Counsaile it pleased the Kynges good grace to graunte the bill above reherced, the which begynneth : 'To the Kyng our moste dradde Souverain Lorde. Besechith humbly your Highnesse,' &c., and signe it with 'R. H.,' and to declare the seid lorde Cromwell and take him as is in the saide bille desired ; and therupon to directe his lettres to my said lorde Cardinall and Chaunceller of England, also signed with 'R.H.' in maner and fourme as folowith :—

"By the Kyng.

"To the moste Reverend fader in God, oure ryght trusty and right entierly welbeloved, the Cardinall and Archebisshop of Caunterbury, oure Chaunceller of England.

"Moost Reverend fader in God, Right trusty and Right entierly welbeloved, we greet you hertly well. And forasmuche as we knowe for certaine the greet saddenesse, substaunce, faith, trouthe, and poletique demeanyng which restyn in the persone of oure ryght trusty and welbelovyd the lorde Cromwell, oure Chamberleyn, whoos counsaile and direccion is right behovefull unto us for the wele of us and of this oure reaume, we woll and charge you that ye on oure behalf doo him to be called to the a waytyng upon and sittyng in oure counsaile as he did afore the tyme of the untrewenoyse and sclandre late made upon him ; lattyng you wite that we, remembryng the greet faith and trouthe that we at all tymes have proved him with, holde, take, and repute him oure faithfull, trewe liegeman and servaunt. And soo we woll ye with all other lordes of oure counsaile understande take and repute him in all wise ; wherin ye and they shall doo unto us singuler good pleasir. Yeven undir oure signet at oure manoir of Eltham, the iiij day of Feverer.

"Nos autem tenorem prædictum ad requisicionem prædicti Radulphi duximus exemplificandum per præsentés. In cujus, &c. Teste Rege apud Westmonasterium xxiij. die Aprilis."