

Original Document.

PETITION BY THE LADY ISABELLA, COUNTESS OF BEDFORD, DAUGHTER OF EDWARD III, ON BEHALF OF HERSELF AND HER DAUGHTER THE COUNTESS OF OXFORD, TO THE COUNCIL OF RICHARD II, RESPECTING THE RENTS OF LANDS AT KENDAL, &c., UNJUSTLY SEIZED BY ALICE PERERS.

Communicated by JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A., Scot.

"Au Conseil nostre Seignur le Roi monstre est que come nadgairs le Roi Edward ayel a nostre dit Seignur le Roi dona et granta a Ingelram de Coucy Conte de Bedeford et a Dame Isabella sa compaignie fille a dit Roi Edward la reversion des diverses seignories manoirs terres et tenementz en Kendalle et ailleurs queux Johane qe feut la femme Johan de Coupeland tenoit a terme de sa vie a avoir et tenir as avantditz Conte et Contesse et a les heirs de lour deux corps engendrez Et qe par defaute dissue la reversion au dit Roi Edward et a ses heirs pour touz iours; vient Alice Perers et ad ouste par subtilite et saunz cause resonable la dite Contesse de les avantditz seignories, manoirs, terres et tenementz par colour des chartres et lettres qe un Lombard en noun le dit Conte fist a la dite Alice et as autres par un aan apres ce qe le dit Conte departist hors d'Engleterre; par virtue des quelles lettres la dite Alice prist eut seisine puis la mort le dit Roi Edward apres la Feste de la Nativite de Saint Johan le Baptist darrein passee, qe plesse au dit Conseil comander lettres de Prive Seal au Duk de Lancastre qil mande a son visconte de Lancastre et ad autres ses ministres destre aidant a Robert Sturmy, Seneschalle, et a Robert Stirkland, Receviour la dite Contesse en les seignories avantditz et as autres ses ministres illoeqes qils pussent tenir courtes et lever et coiller les rentes et fermes et faire ce q'appartient a lour offices pour le profit la dite Contesse et pour contreester la nounresonable entree et presence la dite Alice nient eyant regard a les avantditz chartres et lettres faites par le dit Lombard tant en desheritance nostre dit Seignur le Roi, come de la dite Contesse et de sa fille la Contesse d'Oxenford, eyant consideracion qe la dite Contesse de Bedeford nest qe soule femme en Engleterre et ne sciet coment avoir aide et recouvrir sinon qen la tres graciouse seignorie de nostre dit Seignur le Roi et son bon Conseil."

[Abstract.]

It is shewn to the Council that the late King Edward, grandfather of the King, granted to Ingelram de Coucy, Earl of Bedford, and Lady Isabella his wife, the King's daughter, the reversion of diverse lordships manors, &c., in Kendal and elsewhere, which Johanna, the widow of John de Coupeland, held for her life, and failing issue of the Earl and

Countess, the reversion to go to King Edward and his heirs for ever ; that Alice Perers had ousted by subtilty and unjustly, the said Countess from these lands, &c., under colour of charters and letters, which a Lombard in the Earl's name, made to Alice and others for a year after the Earl left England, under which Alice took seisine since King Edward's death, after the Feast of the Nativity of S. John Baptist last past. The Council are "prayed" to direct Letters of Privy Seal to the Duke of Lancaster to order his Sheriff of Lancaster and others his servants to assist Robert Sturny, Steward, and Robert Stirkland, Receiver to the Countess, and her other servants, to hold courts, collect the rents and duties, &c., and contest the unreasonable entry and presence of Alice ; paying no regard to the foresaid charters and letters made by the said Lombard, as much in disinheritance of our said Lord the King, as of the Countess and her daughter the Countess of Oxford, considering that the Countess of Bedford is but a lone woman in England, and knows not how to have help and to recover, unless in the most gracious Lordship of the King and Council.

In a late number of the *Journal*,¹ I had the honour of contributing an unprinted grant, by Ingelram, Earl of Bedford, to his father-in-law, of the reversion to all lands which Johanna, widow of John de Coupeland, held for her life. As the cause of granting was not mentioned, and the name of the lands was not given, the object of the grant was not apparent. Since then, the discovery of the foregoing petition, and the light thrown on it by other documents referred to in Mrs. Everett Green's *Princesses of England*, clears up the matter. The lands conveyed in that Grant are shown by this petition to have been in Kendal ; and were, no doubt, parts of the inheritance of the Lindsays of Lamberton, which came into the Coucy family by the marriage of an heiress, Christina de Lindsay ; though the rights of her descendants had been suspended during the wars with France. And they were conveyed by Ingelram to his father-in-law on the occasion of his being created an earl in 1367, shortly after his marriage.

It is also clear, from the recital in a Patent of Richard II. in favour of his aunt Isabella, dated 27th November 1377 (printed in Mrs. Green's *Lives*, vol. iii, Appendix, No. vii), that Edward I. had re-granted the reversion of the Kendal lands (with many others) to his daughter and son-in-law ; and that these were life-rented by Johanna de Coupeland. She only died shortly before 12th December, 1375 (*Rot. Scot.*, vol. i, p. 973 a) ; her husband, who was a trusted servant of Edward III. for his services at Neville's Cross, having been slain in 1362 (Mrs. Green's *Lives*, vol. iii, p. 142, note 4).

As Mrs. Green points out, the Lord of Coucy, a French subject by birth, and only bound by matrimonial ties to the country of his wife, had a difficult part to play when war broke out between England and France. He seems to have been an affectionate husband, and for some years after 1368, took the middle course of serving under the Pope, in the Italian wars. But after the death of Edward III. he formally renounced his allegiance to the English king, and gave up his Order of the Garter, in a letter dated 26th August, 1377, addressed to Richard II, which will be found in Rymer's *Fœdera*. Then, as a matter of course, the various lands, &c., held by his wife and himself in England were forfeited, and on

¹ Vol. xxxv, p. 166

her petition to Parliament they were conveyed by the already referred to Letters Patent, to the Archbishop of York and other trustees for her benefit. But it was provided that this was only to be so while she remained in England, the possessions lapsing again to the Crown on her going abroad to join her husband. The Patent also carefully excepts from the re-conveyance many possessions formerly held by the spouses, viz. : the Castle and Honour of Carisbrooke in the Isle of Wight, certain rents of the Town of Rochester, and rents and castle ward of the Castle of Rochester, and others too important to be entrusted to the keeping of an enemy.

The Lombard, whose proceedings are questioned in the present petition, was probably a creditor of the Sire de Coucy. But how the notorious Alice Perers came to be concerned in the affair is not explained. Mrs. Green appears to think that the fact of her being so much about the late king, was a reason for De Coucy's absenting himself from England. If so, it is singular that his agent the Lombard, who must have had some sort of colour for his proceedings, was empowered to deal with her to the detriment of the princess and her daughter.

The document by the way has an indorsation, to the effect that since it is found on record that the lands were held of the king in chief, and the reversion to him if the earl and countess died childless, and no license of alienation had been found in the Chancery, therefore the Council resolved to seize the lands in the king's hand, by briefs in general terms, *i.e.*, "*certis de causis*," saving all rights; and if any one was aggrieved, let him sue the Council and right would be done.

It is one of a numerous and not much known class of documents—the Petitions to the King in Council, preserved in the Public Record Office. They amount to many thousands, and are often extremely interesting.