

ORDINANCE FOR THE BETTER OBSERVANCE OF THE
OBITS AND SERVICES FOR THE DEAD, THROUGHOUT
THE SUBORDINATE FOUNDATIONS OF CLUNI.

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THE following singular and important document, being an Ordinance emanating from the Priory of la Charité sur Loire to its several affiliations in France and England, should of right have found its place among the lately published Charters and Records of the Monasticon Cluniacense Anglicanum. It has, however, only recently been acquired by the French National Library, and for its transcript, made with his own hand, we have to tender our sincerest obligations to M. Léopold Delisle, the eminent Director-General of that establishment. The peculiar value and interest which attach to this record, are a sufficient apology for its present, though somewhat tardy publication, but it seems especially suited to the pages of these "Collections," seeing that Lewes Priory (*possibly* conjointly with the Benedictine Abbey of Battle) was the house principally concerned in the due execution of the ordinance.

The mode and order employed for transmitting notice of deaths occurring among members of all Cluniac foundations, subordinate to the Priory of la Charité, is interestingly set forth, and affords a curious example of the reciprocal system of announcing the fact, both in France and England. Longueville,¹ in the vicinity of

¹ Longueville, in the Pays de Caux, lies between Dieppe and Rouen. It was the seat of a Cluniac priory dedicated to St. Faith, and founded in 1093 by Walter Giffard, Earl of Longueville in Normandy, and Earl of Buckingham in England, who, dying in 1102, was there buried. Among other endowments, he gave it the manor of Newton-Longville in Bucks, from which the cell there founded derived its appellation.

Both the castle and monastery of Longueville were long known as Longueville-Giffard (or Guiffard); See mandate dated at Rouen (*t.* Hen. VI.), to the bailiff of Caux, to induct Robert Fabri to the chapel of the castle of Longueville-Guiffard (Rymer ix., 713); and, in 1421, restitution of the temporalities is made to the prior of St. Faith, Longueville-Guiffard (*ib.* x., 160).

Dieppe, was the priory named from which such notice, occurring among French ecclesiastics, was to be forwarded to England, and to which, on the other hand, similar intelligence of deaths was to be brought, occurring among those of the same order in England.

For the due circulation of such information, it had been customary in olden time, but had apparently somewhat fallen out of use, as we learn from the document, to send messengers from one convent to all others of the same order, notifying the decease of any member, or members of the community. This laudable practice was observed, to the intent that they might be remembered in the masses, or services for the souls of the dead; being the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer for the departed.

The situation of Longueville Priory, from its vicinity to Dieppe, was eminently adapted for this purpose of communication, and that port was plainly selected as the most accessible for the Sussex coast, from whence to pass or re-pass the Channel, either for Lewes or Battle.² Its prior (in conjunction with the priors and procurators of all other Cluniac foundations), was called upon to transmit and receive all such notices, as they arrived; and the infringement of this obligation, or its neglect, was punishable by exclusion from communion of the Church, and other penalties. This we learn from the concluding words of the record.

Without such reciprocal interchange, troublesome and tedious though it was, neither the Bead- (Bede-) roll³ of the order (soliciting the prayers of the faithful), or the Obit-roll⁴ (containing the deaths of the brethren and

² Dieppe was opposite to Rye, one of the Cinque-Ports, and both these seaports were much used in the days of the Plantagenet Kings, and even later. The latter was the ancient port of departure for the Continent, and to it, in 1572, the refugees escaped from Dieppe. This last was from the earliest times, the chief French port for the embarkation and disembarkation of troops, to and fro, even when *en route* for Calais from this country.

³ A bead (or bede) is tantamount to a prayer (Jacob, Law Dict.) The bead-roll was a list of deceased persons, for the repose of whose souls a certain number of prayers were recited, and as such was necessary and used for keeping the *obit*, or anniversary of their death; observing such days with prayers.

⁴ Obits were the solemn services for the dead, or for the repose of a departed soul, performed before interment; as well as those on the anniversary of a person's death.

their anniversary services), could be either properly drawn up or recorded; hence the Ordinance for the renewal, and proper observance of the practice; from a neglect of which (observes the document), the dead had in many cases been deprived of that "holy and wholesome thought," namely, the offering up of prayers, by which they were loosed from their sins.

Universis presentes litteras inspecturis, frater Johannes, humilis prior de Caritate, & ejusdem loci conventus, salutem in Domino. Cum sancta & salubris sit cogitatio pro defunctis orare ut a peccatis solvantur, ne fratres sub domo de Caritate ubilibet habitantes, de hoc seculo migraturi, non auditis eorum obitibus,⁴ quod ob deferendorum brevium negligenciam multociens novimus evenisse, debitis orationum suffragiis defraudentur; Nos, antiquum & pium statutum, in ecclesia nostra de Karitate pro fatribus nostris defunctis huc usque laudabiliter observatum, renovare volentes, statuimus, et, ut perpetuitatem obtineat, illud sanctum statutum approbando unanimiter confirmamus, scilicet, quod uni famulo in domo nostra de Caritate, deputato defunctorum fratrum brevibus deferendis provideatur, sicut hactenus et diu est consuetum, statuentes ut idem famulus, quotiens in eadem domo fratrem obire contigerit, infra biduum post ipsius obitum iter arripiat, ejusdem fratris breve⁵ portaturus per omnes domos ad ecclesiam de Karitate pertinentes citra mare Anglie constitutas. In quacunq[ue] autem dictarum domorum venerit, quotiens novum breve detulerit, una nocte sufficienter procurabitur, & sex denarios monete currentis percipiet, a priore vel procuratore sive celerario ejusdem domus sibi, antequam dictam domum exeat, sine aliqua difficultate persolvendos. Cum autem apud Longam Villam venerit, ibidem breve dimittet, & cum litteris prioris vel conventus ejusdem domus, si prior presens non fuerit, nomen brevigeri tenoremque brevis continentibus, apud Karitatem redibit. Prior

⁵ Breve would be the deed announcing the death of a member of a monastic fraternity; it was also the circular notice or certificate of it, forwarded from one convent to another of the same order; *breve mortuorum*, or *de defunctis*, or *pro defunctis* (*Du Cange*). It was from this that the bead-roll, or register of deaths to be prayed for was constituted.

vero, vel celerarius de Longavilla, per primum nuncium quem post breve susceptum in Angliam transfretabit, illud destinabunt ad propinquiorem de domibus nostris in Anglia constitutis,⁶ ut inde ad alias domos possit transferri. Illud quoque in virtute obedientie firmiter precipimus omnibus prioribus et procuratoribus domorum que sunt citra mare Anglie constitute, ut ille in cujus domo frater decesserit, de brevi transmittendo sibi provideat, ut infra triduum post ipsius patris obitum, nuncius ejus iter arripiat apud Karitatem, dictum breve delaturus. Priores vero domorum nostrarum in Anglia positarum, infra octo dies post obitum fratrum penes ipsos decedentium nuncios proprios, cum brevibus fratrum defunctorum, apud Longam Villam iter aggredi faciant, & ipsi nuncii, cum illuc brevia detulerint antedicta, cum litteris prioris vel conventus ejusdem domus, si prior presens non fuerit, nomen nuncii tenoremque brevis continentibus, ad domos redibunt unde missi fuerunt. Que videlicet brevia, cum apud Longam Villam fuerint deportata, ibidem conserventur, quousque per brevigerum ejusdem domus, cum ad nos venerit, vel per nostrum, cum illuc iverit, apud Caritatem deportentur. Omnium autem domorum nostrarum fratribus firmiter injungimus, ut ea die qua breve susceperint, pro fratribus defunctis quicquid ordo Cluniacensis exigit facere non omittant. Quicumque autem prior, vel procurator, ubilibet habitans, breve fratris apud ipsum defuncti ad locum sibi determinatum & infra terminum sibi prefixum, sicut superius est expressum, transmittere neglexerit, ex tunc in antea, quousque illud transmiserit, potum omnimodo liquoris preterquam aquam, & introitum ecclesie sibi noverit interdictum. Actum anno Domini M^o CC^o XL^o septimo, die Assumptionis beate Marie.

[*Original draft ; among the Additional Latin MSS. of the National Library of France ; No. 2566, mem. 4.*]

⁶ The nearest Cluniac monastery would have been that of Lewes.