

Original Letters

OF

SIR EDWARD COKE & EDWARD LORD CROMWELL.

COMMUNICATED BY

G. A. CARTHEW, ESQ., F.S.A.

I AM permitted by our noble Vice-president, Lord Sondes, to communicate to the Society the following original letters, selected from the muniment-room at Elmham, which, although containing no matter of historical importance, may be considered of interest, in consequence of the great reputation of at least one of the correspondents. The subject of these letters may be better understood if I am allowed to introduce them by a few prefatory remarks.

The Manor and Park of North Elmham, itself formerly a Bishop's See, continued a possession of the Bishops of Norwich until the 27th year of Henry VIII., when that rapacious King compelled Richard Nix, the blind Bishop, to give it him in exchange. He then granted it to his minister, Thomas Lord Cromwell, afterwards Earl of Essex, whose fate is well known. The forfeiture of this property, however, was not involved in his fall. It descended to Edward Lord Cromwell, his great grandson, in 1592. This latter nobleman, we are informed by Sir H. Spelman,* wasted his inheritance. Having probably become desperate, he was induced to join the then Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, in his mad enterprise to coerce the Queen, and was involved in his friend's

* "Rex acceptum D. Cromwello contulit funestum donum."—"Securi enim hic adimitur, et effuso postea integro patrimonio, pronepos ejus D. Coke ipsum venundavit, ærumnarum satis exin conscio."—*Icenia*, 150.

ruin, suffering in consequence the fine and imprisonment alluded to in his letter subjoined. He had already incumbered the Elmham estate to a great extent, and on 21st Oct., 1598, entered into an agreement with Edward Coke, of Godwicke, Esq., then the Queen's attorney general, for its absolute sale. His pressing difficulties are evident from the number of his applications for small sums of money, and authorizing payments to his creditors out of the purchase-money before the conveyance was finally completed. In the meantime his tenants at Elmham and Beteley took the advantage to commit trespasses and assert claims without right or title; and particularly one Mr. Taverner, a gentleman residing at Elmham, who appears all along to have had a spite against the Cromwell family, not only induced the copyhold tenants to make a false presentment of the customs of the manor, but, being himself a large copyhold tenant, pretended that his lands had been enfranchised, so that at the time of "Mr. Attorney's" purchase Lord Cromwell was also involved in a multiplicity of law-suits. But when the great lawyer became lord and master at Elmham, the tables were turned. Mr. Taverner had consented to the submission of some points at issue to Sir Robert Houghton, a learned lawyer, afterwards a judge of the King's Bench, who decided against him. The first of the following letters was written upon a copy of Sir Robert's award, and is in Coke's own hand-writing. The second was one addressed to Coke by the Lord Cromwell. Fac-similes are given of both signatures.

G. A. C.

1 Maij, 1601.

Mr. Taverner,—Seing you have bene heard at large before a grave and a learned man, who heard it by your owne consent, and have ordered it vnder his hande. If nowe you shall beginne to contende with me, (which never any man

yet did) and yet I challandg this to my selfe that never any man have done more for you than I have done, then you shall give me leave to take such a course with you as by lawe I may doe, and then you will repent your self, and I shall gaine by it. Yet for that I cannot be psuaded you will deal so perversly with me, I have sent this bearer, John Furnes and Rich Constable, my servants, to you for paym^t of the ar-rerages of Rents, for pformance of this pvrchas in all things, and for suffering my poore tenants to live in quiet. . . . And if you shall refuse to this finall request, sure I am you shall repent it.

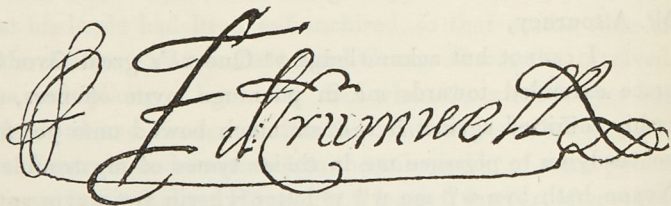
Edm Coke

Mr. Attourney,

I cannot but acknowledge y^e Queene's great favor & grace extended towards me in pdoninge myne offences, so rashly comitted against her, & am much bownd unto yo^u for yo^r readynes to pleasure me in theise tymes of my troubles. Noxon hath byn wth me wth y^r letter wherein yo^u wryte vnto me to dischargd A judgement had against me by hym, whervnto y^e lande yo^u purchased of me is subject: for the dischargding wherof I am bownd to yo^u both by law, and honor: It is not alltogether unknowne to yo^u what great chardges & losses I have had by theise my late troubles, besydes y^e fyne imposed on me, and other hynderances I am like to susteyne by reason of her Mat^{ties} heavy countenance towards me, and my confyned imprisonment, wherby I am not able to mannage myne owne affaires for y^e suppliment of my p^rsent necessity: All w^{ch} disables me y^e discharggeing therof so speedely as I would. I have therfore taken this order wth noxon that if he will now lend me cc^{li} to supply my present wantes, he shall have y^e money due as well vppon y^e judge-

ment as y^e said 2 hundred pownds repaid hym, vppoⁿ y^e first money shall be paid vnto me vppoⁿ such surplisage as shall happen vppoⁿ y^e sale of y^t lande I have morgaged vnto y^e Queene for her fyne jposed on me, of w^{ch} course he well liketh and willingly would furnish me wth 2^e li, if by yo^u he might be assuered how such kynde of satisfaction might be made unto him: (Might I not further prevaile wth yo^u, as to sett down A course vnto hym, how of theise sumes he may be satisfied wth p^{te} of y^t surplesage shall arise vnto me, wherby my needfull tourne may now be releevd). I should thinck my self much bownde vnto yo^u, and rest ready to requite yo^r kyndnesses shewed vnto me, as God shall enable me: Thus hoping of yo^r favor herein, wth my most hartly comendacōs comitt yo^u to God: This 2j August, 1601.

Yo^{rs} most assueredly, to his power,



Postscript.

If I might fynde so much favor of yo^e as to give yo^r worde to Noxon y^t such manner of satisfaction shall be made vnto hym as before in my letter is expressed, yo^e shall have of me any warrant or assuerance yo^u cann devise, for y^e defaulting therof, vppoⁿ such money as shall come vnto me for y^t Lande.

To y^e right worshipful myne especiall good frend Edward Coke, esquire, her highnes at-tourney generall.

Pedigree of Sir Henry Paston Bedingfeld.

