

GABRIEL SILVESTER, PRIEST,

(HERETOFORE KNOWN AS SILVESTER GABRIEL),

Buried in Croydon Church, A.D. 1512.

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IN Croydon Church there is a well-known effigy, in brass, of a priest, vested in a cope, with the following elegiac epitaph, which has often been printed:—

“ Silvester Gabriel, cujus lapis hic tegit ossa,
Vera sacerdotum gloria nuper erat,
Legis nemo sacræ divina volumina verbis
Clarius, aut vita sanctius explicuit.
Cominus ergo Deum, modo felix eminus almīs
[Quem] prius in Scriptis viderat, ante videt.
An. Dni mill'mo V^{exij}, iiii die Octobr' vita est funct.”

More than thirty years ago, when I visited the church and read these lines, I expressed a very decided opinion that the Christian and surnames had been transposed for the sake of the scanning, and that the name of the priest commemorated was really Gabriel Silvester; in which case, it will be obvious that the transposition was absolutely necessary for the rhythm of the first line.

The historians of Croydon are, however, evidently against this view, and I met with no one who would accept my theory. A late learned friend and archæologist to whom I more recently submitted it, replied, that the licence I had assumed to have been taken seemed incredible; and that as Gabriel occurs as a surname *now*, why might it not have been a surname *then*? The arguments by which I endeavoured to support my opinion

have ceased to be material, because having now found the will of Gabriel Silvester, synchronizing with the date of his death recorded on the monument, my proposition is established; for he, lying sick at Croydon, made his will on the 29th of September, 1512, and dying on the 4th of October following, it was proved on the 20th of the same month.

Besides determining the true name of this priest, who, from the elegiac verse inscribed upon his tomb, was an eminent and pious ecclesiastic, the will is also, I think, from its contents, of sufficient interest to be presented to the Members of the Surrey Archæological Society.

Were I better acquainted than I am with the ancient history of the County of Surrey, I might have been able to add some notes respecting the various legatees mentioned in the testament, whose names are, with one exception, historically unknown to me. This defect some members of the Society may perhaps be able to supply.

From the special mention of Clare Hall, Cambridge, I infer that Gabriel Silvester was probably a member of that house. At the time of his death he was Rector of Wyberton (in Lincolnshire), Folkington (in Sussex), and a Prebendary of Chichester.

It is certain from the injunctions with respect to his burial, that he died at Croydon; and if by "his g^rcyeux lorde and master," whom he beseeches "to be good and g^rcyouse lorde to this my pore testament," he means, as I conjecture, Archbishop Warham, and if, by his legacies to the clergy of "my lordis chapell," he refers to the Archbishop's Chapel in Croydon, he probably held some office in that prelate's household.

The eminent Dr. Tunstall (afterwards Bishop of London and Durham), whom he appoints one of his executors, was probably at this time his Grace's Vicar-general.

THE WILL OF GABRIEL SILVESTER, PRIEST.

Dated the 29th of September and proved the 20th of October, 1512.

In the Name of God, Amen. I Gabriell Silvester, clerke, the xxix day of the monyth of Septembr' the yere of oure lorde god a Mⁱ Vth xij^o being of hoole remembraunce, god be praysid, but seke of my body, make and ordeyne this my last will and testament in this forme and maner, ffirst I geve and commende w^t full feith, hope and charite my pore sowle into the handis of the holy trinite, the father the sonne and the hooly gooste be seching the moste blessid lady the dere modere of god and that hooly Archangell Gabriell the messenger of our redempcion, w^t all his hooly company and all the blissid sainte of hevyn to sollicite and prey for the ever lasting lyff of my sowle. It'm I bequeth my body to be buryed in Crystenmannys buryall as it shalbe sene by myne executo^rs in the pish where I shall die w^t the lawys and customys of the same pische, It'm I bequeth to the same chuyrch such mortuarye as shalbe lawfully requyred and all other dewtys, It'm I bequeth to the same chirch xx^s. It'm to my pische church of Wyberton a vestment p^rce xl^s. It'm I bequeth xiiij^s iiij^d to be disposid emongg^e the pore people of the same pische where moste nede is. It'm to my church of ffolkynghton I bequeth a vestment price xxvj^s viij^d. and xl^s to be disposid emong^e the pore people in the same pische, It'm I bequeth xiiij^s iiij^d to be disposid emonge the pore people of my p^rbende of Wyforth, It'm I bequeth emong the pore people of Colworth¹ xiiij^s iiij^d. It'm I bequeth to my g^reyeux lorde and master my signet besechyng hym tobe good and g^reyouse lorde to this my pore testament. It'm I bequeth to the college called Clare hall in Cambrige thre goblette^r w^t a cover, It'm I bequeth to doctor Tunstall,² the lawe of the church

¹ I have not been able to identify the Prebend of Wyforth, but in the "Fasti Cicestrensis" under Colworth prebend is, 1508, Gabriel Silvester. Reg. Sherborne f. 22, followed by, 1512, Henry Edial. Reg. Sherborne f. 23.—*Journal of British Arch. Association*, vol. XXII. p. 131.

² The very learned Cuthbert Tunstall, on his return from Padua, where he took the degree of Doctor of Laws, was made by Archbishop Warham, his Vicar-general, but in what year does not appear, nor do I find when he resigned the office, though Newcourt says that he held it in 1508. In 1511 the same archbishop conferred on him the Rectory of Harrow-on-the-Hill, which he did not resign till 1522. In 1516 he was made Master of the Rolls; other preferments followed, and in 1522 he was consecrated Bishop of London; in the following year he was made Keeper of the Privy Seal, and in 1530 was translated to the See of Durham, from which he was ejected by Edw. VI., restored by Mary, and thrust out again in 1559, when Elizabeth came to the throne. He died on the 18th Nov. in that year, and was buried in the chancel at Lambeth.—*Newcourt's Repert. Lond.*, vol. I. p. 25.

not offendid, my best horsse, my gowne cloth of cremesyn and my lute. It'm I bequeth to Docto^r Perte my beste sadill w^t the harnesse and dowblet clothe of satten, It'm to Thomas Hyns I bequeth my thirde horsse w^t suych harnesse as is mete for hym. It'm to master John Perys my best girdil and my beste bagg and a gilte sponne w^t a shorte stele.¹ It'm to Master Doct^r Wellis a gilt sponne, It'm to Doct^r Clement a harnesed girdill siluer and gilt, It'm to Mast^r Doct^r Chamb^r a bag of satten and a gilt sponne, It'm to the right r'uende fader in god Archbisshop of Develyn² a gilt sponne. It'm Doct^r Sapton a gilt sponne, It'm to Sir William Ffynderne a gylt sponne, It'm I bequeth to the parish church Loughborowe xx^s. It'm to the prior of Hertford my l puke gowne³ furrid w^t shank^e⁴ and the hooode, It'm to the same prio^r, Saint Austeyn S^rmonys in ij volumys. All the residew of my goodis I geve and bequeth to Doct^r Dunstall,⁵ Doct^r Pert and Thomas Hyns whom I name and desyre to be mynne executours willing and desyring them that they shall dispose the residew of my goodis thus, ffurst whenne they be praysid that they devyde theme in two equall sumys, the first halff wherof ageyn to be devidid into two equal sumys, the ffirst halff disposid to preistis specially at Clare hall as it shalbe seyn to my famyliar s^ru^{nt} and executo^r Thomas Hyns. It'm I wolle that the smⁿ of money rysing of the other halff be disposid to pore people after the discrecion of my saide famyliare s^ru^{nt} Thomas Hyns and the other halff of the hoole I geve and bequeth to my saide s^ru^{nt} Thomas Hyns to pray for my sowle. And in this my last will and testament I revoke all other before made or hereafter to be made, It'm I ferther bequeth to every preste of my lordis chapell vjs viij^d and to eu^y seculer of the chapell iij^s iij^d and to every childe of the chapell xij^d. It'm I bequeth to the Quenys Elimosinar my tache of golde w^t the safer.⁶ It'm I bequeth to Master Whytehede a tache of golde w^t the V woundys, It'm to M^r Chaundeler a tache of the Salutacion, It'm to the Master of Clare hall a tache w^t the Salutacion. I bequeth to Alice Alceto^r my better tawny gowne furrid w^t boge⁷ and the hode, It'm to the same Alice my beste chamlet dowblet, It'm I bequeth to Sir Henry Glover the price of his blak gowne that he shulde pay me, It'm also the same Sir Henry

¹ *Stele*, shank, stem or handle.—Halliwell's *Archaic Dict.*

² Dublin.

³ This may probably be correctly read "long puke gowne." Puke is explained by Barret as a colour between russet and black. John Chillingworth was Prior of Hertford in 1511, and Thomas Hampton is said to have been elected in 1514, according to Willis, but it appears that the date must have been earlier, for in 1512-13, being then Prior, he had license to preach by privilege of his monastery.—Dugdale III. p. 298.

⁴ Fur from the shank of a kind of kid.

⁵ *Sic* for Tunstall.

⁶ Sapphire. Tache, a clasp.

⁷ Budge, lambskin with the wool dressed outwards, usually worn on the edges of gowns and capes; also, the fur from the shank of a kind of kid, more usually called shanks.

a silu^r spone w^t the image over the ende. It'm I bequeth to Colne Abbey the other halff dozen sponys w^t acornys on the endis. It'm to Thomas Hore a chamlet dowblet, a paire of hose. It'm I bequeth to my s^ruaundis theyre wage^l till christmasse and theyr leverye. It'm I bequeth M^r Geffrey a ring w^t a dyamonde which I had of hym. It'm I will that my ffermours of my bⁿifices and p^rbendis be dischargid of the dyues at my discharge.

Probatum fuit testamentum antedicti defuncti &c. &c. xx^o die mensis Octobris anno Dni M^o V^c xij^o, jura'to Thome Hyns, Executoris &c. &c.
