



Letters of the last Abbot of Reading. From Originals among the State Papers.

By Nathaniel Hone.

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(Continued from page 60.)

ABBOT OF READING TO LORD LISLE.*

[*Lisle Papers*, vij., 3.]

My singler good lord in my most hartie wise I have me recomaunded vnto yo^r lordshipp, pleasith it the same to be advertised that an honest man, a neighbour of myne, this berer, hath a doughter now dwelling in Caleys, whos husband of late dyed, called Richard Wynton. My lord I hartely desire yo^r lordshipp, at this my contemplacion, to extend yo^r goodnes vnto the said woman, and to this my neighbour which is her father, in her cause. And in yo^r lordshippes so doying, ye shall deserve thanks of Almighty, w^t such poore thanks as shall lye in me. My lord, this shall be further to advertise yo^r lordshipp, that of late a servant of yo^rs, as he said, named Kyng, came to me to Redyng, saying to me that he was robbed. And forasmuch as he said he was yo^r servant and went about yo^r busynes I wold be veray loth to se any servant of yo^r lordshippes to be destitute or lack wher I am, wher uppon he desired me to help hym to a hors and sum money. The trouth is I bought hym a hors that cost me x^s and also lent hym an angell noble wherof he promised me payment agayn. I besече yo^r lordshipp to help me to the seid smale sum of money. And thus the holy gost preserve yo^r good lordshipp long in honor. At Redying the last day of August [1535]. ffrom yo^r lordshippes vnfaynedly

Hugh Abbat, ther.

Add To his singler good lord, my Lord Lisle, his good lordshipp this be delyvered.

ABBOT OF READING TO CROMWELL.

[*S. P. Dom. Hen. VIII.*, vol. xii., p^t 2, 1205.]

J. H. S.

Rygh honorabyll and my singler good lorde, my duyty presupposyd. Thys ys to avertise yo^r Lordechep that we have sproyng vp in ow^r contes, by whome yet the trwethe not knowen, but thys man was the furste that shoyd me the moste lamentabyll and hevyest tydyngss that ever was harde to any man now lyving, that ou^r most gratyest Kynge shoulde be dede and the lords markes of Exseter, the brygger thereof my servant, whose name ys Nycolas Wylkenson, from the bere the xijth day of December [1537]

by you^r true bedman

Hugh Abbat of Redyng.

Add To the Ryght honorabull Lorde to the lorde pryvy sele.

* Arthur Plantagent, natural son of Edward IV., then Deputy Governor of Calais.

In the same volume of State Papers Domestic, No. 1256, is a letter from Sir Walter Stonore, Sir W. Essex and Thomas Vachell to Cromwell, dated "Colley upon Chrystys even," enclosing the result of an enquiry into this matter, with depositions of the witnesses; the persons examined being Sir George Barton, "parson of Bradfyld"; William Cryppes, weaver; Nycolas Wykinson, servant to the Abbot; and the Abbot himself, "then lying at the house called the Bear,* for fear of infection." In his deposition he states that "on our Lady Day† Nicolas Wilkinson came to him the said Abbot, to his house called the Bear, about viij of the clock in the night. And said unto him that Sir John Norres (of Yattenden) had lent him a horse to come and bring him word that the King's highness was dead, and that he departed a Wednesday last past," adding that Sir John received the news from "John Norres that is gentleman usher to the Kings grace." The Abbot proceeds to state that "walking abroad" he met William Edmonds, the under sheriff, by whom he sent word of the said report to Sir William Essex, then Custos Rotulorum of the County. The above letter, coupled with the deposition, clears the Abbot of any suspicion of the disloyalty to his sovereign, which it was sought to fix upon him. The signature of the Abbot, attached to this document, is here reproduced in facsimile.

John abbot of Redyng

ABBOT OF READING TO CROMWELL.

[*S. P. Dom., Hen. VIII., vol. viij., p^t i., 147.*]

My dewtie remembrede in most humble wise towarde yo^r good Lordshipe, please yt the same to vnderstande that whereas I receiue yo^r letters of Late, wherein yo^r Lordshipp declarith that ye wer informide that the diuinite Lecture in this monastery hath not ben redde as it ought to have been. And thereby my brethern browght to a corrupt ingement, willing me therefore to receve on Richard Cobbes, chanon, to be reader of the said Lecture, w^t a convenient stipende and comons at my borde: Although my good Lorde I and my brethern be alwais redy to do that thyng that shalbe to yo^r pleasure, in that or any other matt^r. yet I cannot but certifie yo^r Lordshipp of the very trewith in this behalf

* Bere Court, Pangbourne.

† December 8th. The feast of our Lady's Conception which was observed with great solemnity in Pre-Reformation times. An ordinance of the Chapter of Canterbury in 1321.—Enacted that the feasts of the oblation (or presentation) and conception of Blessed Mary should be yearly celebrated "in cappis solemnibus cum tota historia de festo mativitat^{is} ejusdem verbo mativitat^{is} in oblationem et conceptionem mutato." Reg. A.

for my declaration. So it is I have alrede a bachelor of divinite, brother of this house, which by the ingement of other that are bett^r lernide than I am, is very well lernid, both in divinite and also in humanite, which no lesse prouffiteth my brethern in the Latyn tong than in the holi scripture, that dothe reade the said lecture continually in this house and w^t farre lesse charge than any other stranger wolde be content with. And for the triall of ingement, I remitte hym to yo^r Lordshipp to be examinede by suche as yow will appoynte therto. Thother that is to yo^r Lordshipp comendid, is (as I perceve by my lorde of Sarum's letters) on that was a chanon and preest sumtime, and is now mariede, wherfor he was degraded which though he wer lernid can not but instill like persuasions of mariage to other, as he is of himself, and that should be but occasion of slander, the lawes standyng as they do yet. Wherfor yt should seme that the deprevation and hynderaunce of the other made to yo^r Lordshipp, was for the preferment of this rather then for any other juste cause, signifying never the lesse vnto yo^r Lordshipp that what so ever shall seme best to the same to be don in that behalf, shall upon knowlege thereof hadd, wyllingly folowe and accomplish the same. But that I am bolde on yo^r Lordshipp, as o^r chieff staye and defender in all owr trobells, to declare the thing as hit lieth first unto yo^r lordshipp, whom the holi trinite may long preserve in honor and helth. Wryten at Redyng the xxvi day of January [1538] by your dayly bedsmen

Hugh Abbat, ther.

Add. To the ryght honorable lord the lord preve sele.

The reader for whom the Abbot pleads was one *Dom Roger London. There is an interesting correspondence between the Bishop of Salisbury (Nicholas Shaxton) and Cromwell bearing on this matter. Writing from Ramsbury, February 5th, 1538, the Bishop states that this monk had recently been accused to him of "heresy," and in a subsequent letter he particularises the charges which had been preferred against him, viz., that he maintained "that Holy Scripture is not sufficient of itself; that ability to preach sincerely is not sufficient qualification for a cure; that faith does not justify without works," &c. He adds that he loves his own nominee, for whom he seeks the preferment "not the less because he was a priest and for marriage degraded." It is not difficult to understand the objection of the Abbot to such a candidate.†

The foregoing appear to be all the letters of the Abbot preserved among the State Papers. Mr. Coates in his *History of Reading* prints one addressed to the University of Oxford from a collection in the Bodleian Library.

* "Roger London, monk of Reading" appears in a list of prisoners at the Tower, 20th November, 1539. Cotton MSS. B.i. f 133.

† For a detailed account of this matter, V. Dom Gasquet's *Last Abbot of Glastonbury and his Companions*, 1895.