

A Berkshire Letter-Book.

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In the Bodleian Library at Oxford there is a small parchment codex, *MS. Digby 154*, which, according to the inscription written on its title-page in a fifteenth-century hand, once belonged to the Abbey of Premonstratensian Canons at Titchfield in Hampshire. The title of the MS. written in a seventeenth-century hand, is "*Expositio Missae*" and it contains a number of entries written in various hands of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For the most part these entries are either of theological or legal interest; they include a treatise on the Mass, the decree of 1309 against the Templars, and part of the treatise on law known by the name of Britton. Among them, however, occurs a collection of letters,¹ written about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and in all probability one of those letter-books which were already in the thirteenth century being compiled partly as formula books, to be used in conjunction with the standard works on the art of dictamen, and partly as records of useful or interesting correspondence.

The great majority of letter-books of this kind were compiled in an ecclesiastical community such as a monastery or a cathedral chapter, and contained entries useful to members of the community for future reference. There is no evidence, however, that this particular letter-book can be assigned to any such body. The Abbey of Titchfield is nowhere mentioned and although this MS. is probably the "*Expositio Missae*" referred to in the catalogue of the Library of Titchfield in 1400², there is no record of how it came into the possession of the canons. The Augustinian Priory of Bicester is mentioned several times in the text but in a way which makes it clear that the MS. did not originate in that house. Apparently this

¹ Folios 35B—40A.

² British Museum: *Harleian MS.* 6603 folio 16.

MS. is a private letter-book, an unusual document at the period, and it seems to have been compiled by two or more men who held the living of Harwell in Berkshire. From internal evidence it appears probable that the first part of the MS. (folios 36A-38A) is a collection of the correspondence of Roger de Marlowe, Rector of Harwell at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and that the second part (folios 38B-40A) was added by his successor about 1318. Two letters on folio 35B and one on folio 40A are in different hands of about the same period. It is, of course, not safe to say that any of the letters is in the actual hand of Roger de Marlowe himself, though the transcription cannot have been made much later than the early years of the fourteenth century. The letters which can be dated cover the period between 1293 and 1317.

Not much is known of Roger de Marlowe's career. He held the living of Harwell in January, 1302, when he obtained *licencia studendi* from Simon de Ghent, Bishop of Salisbury.¹ He probably died before June 1st, 1310, when Piers Gaveston presented Walter of London to the living of Harwell.² From his letters Roger de Marlowe appears to have been a well-educated man and one who was zealous in performing his parochial duties and in undertaking business for his colleagues.

The position of the parish priest of Harwell was peculiar. The parish included the two manors of Bishop's Harwell and Prince's Harwell. Bishop's Harwell had belonged to the Bishops of Winchester since the days of Edward the Confessor, and Edward I had quite recently confirmed Bishop John de Pontissara in its possession.³ Thus, although the Rector of Harwell was subject in ecclesiastical matters to the Bishop of Salisbury, about half his parishioners were tenants of the Bishop of Winchester, whose servants could at times prove themselves thoroughly troublesome.⁴

The manor of Prince's Harwell, together with the right of presentation to the living, was part of the honour of St. Valery

¹ *Registrum Simonis de Gandavo*: ed. Flower and Dawes: p. 851.

² *Ibid.* p. 728.

³ *Cal. Chart. Rolls 1257-1300*, p. 274.

⁴ See letter 19 below.

in England and had passed to Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, a cousin of Edward I, on the death of his father, Richard.¹ After Edmund's death Harwell formed part of the dower of his wife, Margaret de Clare, sister of Gilbert "the Red," ninth Earl of Gloucester.² Both the Earl and Countess are mentioned more than once in the letter-book, and several of the letters deal with the legal business involved in winding up Margaret's estates. She died before September, 1312, when Edward II granted the manor of Harwell to John Comyn in recognition of his services.³ After the death of Comyn at Bannockburn the manor, valued at £30 a year, passed for three years to his widow, Margaret.⁴ In 1316 Edward took back the manor, compensating Margaret Comyn with an annuity of £30, and granted it to Margaret de Clare, a niece of the Margaret mentioned above, who was the widow of Piers Gaveston.⁵

The fact that the Earl and Countess of Cornwall were successively patrons of the living during the time that Roger de Marlowe was at Harwell explains his obvious interest in their affairs. He seems, moreover, to have been on terms of intimate friendship with the Earl's chaplain, the Franciscan John Rossel or Russell.⁶ The family of de Comyn is not mentioned by name, although it is possible that the J de C in letter 13 may refer to John de Comyn. The habit, so common in the thirteenth century, of indicating names merely by initial letters which are not always the correct initials, makes it almost impossible to verify a suggestion such as this. The Bishop of Salisbury (Simon de Ghent) is mentioned several times and the Bishop of Winchester, who owned the other manor of Harwell, once, when his harvesters came into conflict with the Rector. Not all the other persons mentioned in the MS. can be traced, though a footnote has been added wherever a name can be identified.

¹ *Cal. Inq. Post Mortem.* Hen. III, p. 273.

² *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1296-1302, p. 426, and 1302-7, p. 252.

³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1307-1313, p. 510.

⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1313-1317, p. 164.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 657.

⁶ See letters 14 and 20 below.

Although there is little that is strikingly original in this collection of letters, there is much that is interesting and attractive. As a fair and unbiassed picture of the life and activities of a parish priest in the early fourteenth century the MS. is undoubtedly of value.

NOTE

In translating this MS. I have followed the original Latin as closely as possible in the main part of each letter. In the salutations at the beginnings and ends, however, an exact translation into English would sound extremely uncouth. I have therefore taken the liberty while altering the words as little as possible, of giving the sense of such a phrase as "*Valete sicut valere vellum*," or "*salutem quam sibi cum omni promptitudine complacendi*" rather than a literal translation.

In cases where the MS. gives initials only, and the rest of the name has been supplied from other sources, the additional letters have been enclosed in square brackets.

I have added a brief note of the contents at the beginning of each letter.

R. M. T. H.

MS. Digby 154.

folio 35B I *The Sheriff of Oxford to the Bailiff of Bullingdon, enclosing the King's writ summoning John de La Chapelle to appear before the Barons of the Exchequer in a lawsuit over a debt.*

R[ichard] de Polhampton, Sheriff of Oxford, to the Bailiff of Bullingdon, greeting. We have received the lord King's command in these words :—

"Edward by God's grace King of England, lord of Ireland, duke of Aquitaine, to the Sheriff of Oxford, greeting. We order you to cause J[ohn] de la Chapelle to come before the Barons of our Exchequer at Westminster on the morrow of the feast of S. Margaret the Virgin, to make answer to Robert Bordoyn, (? the servant)¹ of our beloved and faithful

¹ Blank in the MS.

Walter de Norwich, our Treasurer, concerning XXVI pounds VII shillings and I penny, which Robert declares that John owes to him, as he may reasonably show that he ought to make answer in this matter. You shall also produce this writ there. Witnessed by H[ervey] de Staunton¹ at Westminster on the XXI day of June in the ninth year of our reign."

Wherefore we order you to carry out this command, and to report your fulfilment of it to us in the quindene of S. John Baptist, with this writ.

- 2 *The Official of the Archdeacon of Oxford to the Dean of Bicester, enclosing a letter from John Dalderby, Bishop of Lincoln, dated March 1st, 1317. This in its turn encloses a letter from Edward II to the Bishop ordering him to put pressure on John de La Chapelle to make him appear before the King's justices at Westminster. The Official asks the Dean to deal with de La Chapelle. April 1st, 1317.*

The Official of Oxford to his discretion . . .² Dean of Bicester, greeting in the name of the Maker of goodwill. We have lately received the command of the lord J[ohn] by God's grace Bishop of Lincoln in this form :—

"John by divine permission Bishop of Lincoln to his dear son in Christ . . .³ Official of the Archdeacon of Oxford, greeting, grace and blessing. We have received a letter from the Lord King in this form :—

"Edward by God's grace, etc., to his reverend father in Christ J[ohn] by the same grace Bishop of Lincoln, greeting. We command you, as we have already done many times, to cause J[ohn] de La Chapelle, parson of the church of Ambresdon and your clerk, to appear before our justices at Westminster three weeks after Easter, to make answer to Peter Cosyn, merchant of Malines, in the plea that he (John) should pay back fifty-seven pounds which he owes to him (Peter), and holds back unjustly, as he says. And because

¹ Who became Chancellor of the Exchequer, June 22nd, 1316. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1313-1317, p. 479*).

² Blank in the MS.

³ Blank in the MS.

our sheriffs of London have at other times warned our Justices at Westminster that the said John is a clerk and has no lay fee in his possession, by which he may be summoned, know that unless you carry out this our command in full we shall take a serious view of your conduct. And this writ shall be produced there. Witnessed by W[illiam] of Beresford¹ at Westminster on the XXI day of November in the X year of our reign."

Wherefore we command you, strictly enjoining you, as often before, in virtue of your obedience and on pain of the greater excommunication, that you do sternly order the said John to appear on the day and in the place aforesaid to fulfil the demands and requirements of the said writ from the King, in virtue of his obedience and on pain of deprivation of his aforesaid benefice. And in order that he may not involve us in responsibility on the said days and the following days assigned in the said place, we will that a sufficient pledge be demanded and taken from him that if he do not plead, you may seize his ecclesiastical goods and keep them in strict custody, at your peril, until you have orders from us, enforcing acquiescence from any who deny or rebel against this judgement by ecclesiastical censure. And you shall inform us of what you have done in this matter before the close of the said Easter by your letters patent containing a full account of all that has happened and a valuation of the goods. Given at the Park of Stowe, March 1st, in the XVII year of our consecration."

Wherefore we strictly command you, on pain of the penalties mentioned above, diligently to fulfil the said command in all its articles in our place. And let us know distinctly and clearly what you have done before Tuesday, or on Thursday at the latest, by your letters patent containing a full account of your doings in the matter and a valuation of the goods which you have found there. Given at Oxford, April 1st, 1317.

¹ Chief Justice in the Court of Common Pleas: (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1307-13, p. 286).

- folio 36A 3 *Roger de Marlowe to A de C*
Letter of recommendation for a man who wished to
become a sub-deacon.

To his discretion, and, if he may say so, his dearest friend Master A de C, R[oger] de M[arlowe] his servant in all things, sends greetings and goodwill. Trusting in your kindness, which, although it exceeds my deserts, I have found gracious to me and my friends, I appeal to you with special confidence, asking you, my friend, with particular earnestness, to give your help and advice to my clerk and parishioner W de H, the bearer of this letter, one of my personal friends, so that by your help he may be found worthy to be raised to the rank of sub-deacon by the laying on of hands by our reverend father and lord S[imon] by God's grace Bishop of Salisbury, in the next batch of ordinations which he is about to perform at Reading, by grace of the Holy Ghost. If you will, remember that at our last meeting, I asked you about him and that you kindly promised to help him even if he had no other testimonial than my letter of recommendation. I also approached our lord Bishop S[imon] about him at [?] Bernesbury and he graciously promised to give him the promotion. I wrote also to Sir Robert de Winchcombe, asking him to use his influence for the sake of his own kindness and of my entreaties, so that by the assistance of both of you the affair may be brought to a satisfactory ending, since I have complete confidence in you. May you continue to flourish as I should choose to do myself.

- 4 *Roger de Marlowe to the Official of the Bishop of Salisbury. Testimonial for John de Herdewyk, presented to the living of Ardington, near Wantage, by the Prior and canons of Bicester. 1307.¹*

To his reverend and prudent lord, and, if he may say so, his very dear friend Master P de R, official of [Simon] the lord Bishop of Salisbury, R[oger] de M[arlowe], chaplain, his servant in all things, sends greeting with all reverence and honour. Since Sir J[ohn] de H[erdewyk] my fellow and chaplain, bearer of this letter, who has been my

¹ *Registrum Simonis de Gandavo*, 690.

colleague in serving the parish of H[arwell] for nearly a year, has been presented to the living of Ardington near Wantage by the Prior and canons of Bicester, acting, as I hope, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, I beg your lordship, in whom I have no small confidence, for the sake of your own kindness and of my entreaties, to be so good as to support him with your counsel and help before our lord Bishop. Know that he is a man of good repute, honest conversation, and a virtuous and sober life and, as I have heard, he has been promised the said parish twelve years ago. Be so kind as to do this, so that by your help the aforesaid business may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and I shall always be most deeply obliged to you. May you flourish, my master and lord, for many years.

- 5 *Roger de Marlowe to R de W Another testimonial for John de Herdewyk. 1307.*

For the same. To the prudent man, and, if he may say so, his intimate friend R de W, R[oger] de M[arlowe], his servant in all things, sends such greeting as he would choose for himself, with all his duty and service. Since Sir J[ohn] de H[erdewyk], my colleague and chaplain, has business with our lord Bishop which he can explain more fully to you himself, I beg you, my friend, to be so good as to help him with particular favour by your advice and assistance, for the sake of your own kindness and of my entreaties, so that by your help the said business may be successfully accomplished, whereby I shall owe you a great debt of gratitude. Farewell.

- 6 *Roger de Marlowe to Walter Herveý, Archdeacon of Salisbury. Testimonial for W de H who wished to be ordained a deacon. 1308.¹*

To his reverend and prudent master, and, if he may say so, his intimate friend Master W[alter] Herveý R[oger] de M[arlowe] sends greeting with all service and honour. If you will be so good, remember, for the sake of your own kindness and of my entreaties, the promise which our venerable father lord S[imon] by God's grace Bishop of Salisbury lately made to me at Middleton near Abingdon,

¹ The Bishop was at Marlborough on July 2nd, 1308. (*Reg. Simonis de Gandavo*, 701).

concerning the promotion of my clerk W de H, bearer of this letter, to the rank of deacon in the holy ordinations which he is to perform, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, at M[arlborough] so that by my testimonial and your advice and assistance he may be raised to the aforesaid rank. If you have any favour to ask of me, good sir, please command me in all things. May you fare well in Jesus Christ, as I should wish to do myself.

- 7 *Roger de Marlowe to the Prior of Bicester, asking for the living of Ardington on behalf of John de Herdewyk. 1307.*

To the reverend, discreet and religious man, and, if he may say so, his very dear friend Sir J . . . by God's wisdom Prior of Bicester, Roger de M[arlowe] priest of the church of H[arwell] and his servant in all things, sends such greeting as he would choose for himself with all his duty and service. Since I have heard that your church of Ardington near Wantage¹ is at present without a vicar who may relieve you of your responsibilities, and since the right of collation to the said vicarage belongs to us, I believe and hope that it would be of advantage to your house if the living were committed to the man who has notice of the said parish, if it be your will and if the Holy Ghost have given him grace to undertake it. Wherefore I appeal to you as to my faithful lord and friend (although I regret to say that I have not deserved your favour) so that for the sake of your kindness and of my entreaties you will grant the living to Sir J[ohn] de H[erdewyk] my colleague, bearer of this letter, who has been serving the church of Ardington for a long time as the vicar's assistant, by kindly presenting him to the same. Farewell.

Please let me know your intentions in this matter.

- 8 *Testimonial for P de F*

To the prudent man, etc., W etc., sends greetings in Him Who is the true safety. Since my colleague and beloved friend Sir P de F, for whom no suitable provision has yet been made, has, as I have heard, found favour with you and since I hope that when the time and opportunity arrive your benevolence and goodness will

¹ The word in the text looks like "Lati" which I cannot identify. It may be a mistake on the part of the writer, as the living is referred to above as that of "Ardington near Wantage."

help him by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, I humbly and earnestly beg you, father, for the sake of your kindness and of my entreaties, and because we are old friends, to deign to consider the matter of his promotion, considering him, if you will, as a suitable candidate. Know that he is a man of virtuous life, honest conversation and good repute and that, as you well know, father, he is sufficiently well-educated. For the love of God, be kind enough to remember him, for he is almost one of your servants. Continue, if you please, your goodwill towards me who am your servant in all things. May the Lord Jesus Christ keep you, father, for many years.

- 9 *Roger de Marlowe to ? Gilbert de Robury.¹
Letter of recommendation for W de Marlowe.*

To the reverend and prudent Sir G[ilbert] de R[obury], Justice of the lord King, his servant R[oger] de M[arlowe] sends such greeting as he would wish for himself. Since my beloved friend in Christ, my clerk and kinsman W de M[arlowe], bearer of this letter, has some business with you in the King's Court which he can explain to you more fully in person and also by a certain document which is in his possession, if he may wait upon you, I beseech you most earnestly, my dear sir, that for the sake of your kindness and of my entreaties you will be so good as to look upon him with favour and grace, of course without prejudice to justice. If you will be so good as to give him your advice and aid, so that his business may be successfully accomplished, and he may feel that my support has been of use to him, I shall always be deeply obliged to you. May you flourish, my lord and friend, for many years. And if I can do anything for you, etc.

- folio 37A 10 *Roger de Marlowe to a monk at Hayles, asking
him to send news and to help in the purchase of a horse
at Winchecombe fair.*

To the religious man and his beloved friend
Sir J de H, monk of the Abbey of
Hayles, R[oger] de Marlowe chaplain of H[arwell]

¹ The identification is not absolutely certain as the initials only are used in the MS. Gilbert de Robury was a justice in the Court of King's Bench in 1316. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1313-1317, p. 435).

sends greeting in Him Who is the true safety and Saviour of the world. As I should like to hear good news of your health and safety I am writing to you, as my particular friend, eagerly desiring you to send me by the bearer news of yourself and the brethren and my friends in the neighbourhood. Also, since having lost some of my horses I am hardly able to go about, and there is at present a fair at Winchcombe near you, where as I have often heard, many horses are to be found, I earnestly beg you to look about and get some of your people to give their advice and help to the bearer and Sir Thomas de Sandford, canon, and also to assist them yourself, so that I may be provided with some suitable horse there, costing not more than four or five marks. May you fare well, as I would fare well. Greet your brethren and companions from me.

- II Roger de Marlowe to P de C
asking him to obtain a licence for study from the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

To the prudent man his friend P de C R[oger] de M[arlowe] his servant in all things sends greeting in Him Who is the true safety. Sir G de B, my colleague, rector of the chapel of E in the diocese of Bath and Wells, is suffering so many varied injuries at the hands of his patron Sir R de R, knight, that he neither can nor dare remain in his house. Wherefore I pray you, as my particular friend, to help him with your counsel and aid in approaching your lord the Bishop of the said diocese, so that with his permission the rector may have licence to go to the schools for at least twelve years and to farm out his chapel. Be so good as to give him a helping hand in this matter, for the sake of your own kindness and of my entreaties, so that he may feel that my support has been of use to him, etc. And since I have heard very good news of your arrival from across the seas, I am overjoyed. I beg you, my friend, to let me know by the bearer how you are and whether I can do anything for you. Farewell.

- II P de S to Roger de Marlowe,
sending a messenger for some information.

To the reverend and honourable Sir R[oger] rector of the church of H[arwell], his servant, if he may say so, brother P de S sends

such blessings as the prayers of poor men may win. Since at our last meeting you said to me "I will fulfil my promise within a week" I am sending you a messenger from the person with whose business we are dealing, who may receive your answer and take it back to him. If you decide to send anything to him, you may entrust it to the bearer, under your seal, as safely as if he were your own messenger. I beg you in your benevolence to pardon my importunity in this matter, since it is not a question of my own affairs but of those of another person who has such full confidence in you that if anything should go wrong, which God forbid, he would think that it was all my fault, for it is written, "The neglect of the petitioner is blamed when the goodness of the giver is not doubted." May you flourish and prosper now and hereafter. Given at Oxford, etc. And since I greatly desire to hear good news of you, I beg you, my dear friend, to let me know how you are. Farewell.

- 13 *W de H to J de C*
Request for advice and help in some business with the
Countess.¹

A letter from a clerk to his lord.² To his dearest lord, if he may say so, and to his best beloved friend in Christ lord J de C, his clerk and servant in all things W de H sends reverence, service and honour. I thank your lordship to the best of my ability for the great favours which you have shown me and still continue to show me, by God's permission, although I feel myself totally unworthy. And since at our last meeting you asked me to do you a service, and graciously promised to repay it, I appeal to you with particular confidence, most earnestly beseeching your lordship, if you please, to do what is necessary in my business with the Countess as soon as possible, and to give me a helping hand, thereby placing me under a deep obligation to you. May your lordship fare well throughout eternal ages. Amen. And please let me know by the bearer what should be done about the said business. Also I beg you to remember my lord who is lately dead, on whose soul God have

¹ Margaret de Clare, wife of Edmund of Cornwall.

² This heading shows that the collection of letters was to be used as a formulary.

mercy, so that for the sake of the love you bore to him and your old friendship you will give advice by which my said business may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Again farewell and good wishes.

folio 37B 14 *John Russell¹ to Roger de Marlowe, saying that he had reached the Franciscan house at Oxford intending to visit him but that he was too ill to travel. He asks for help in buying himself winter clothes.*

To his close and dear friend Sir R[oger] de M[arlowe] his brother J[ohn] Rossel sends greeting in the love which knows no bounds. I came to the chapter of our brethren at Oxford intending to visit you in person, but now bodily weakness prevents me from taking the road. And since I rely on you in my needs, my dear friend, I turn to you now, begging you, in whom I have the fullest confidence to deign to help me at this time with alms to buy clothes against the coming winter, since I am more destitute than usual. I do not mean to worry you again with such requests, so for the sake of your lords who loved you and brought you up do me this favour as soon as possible. You may send the money safely by the bearer. Farewell in the bond of our old and renewed friendship.

15. *J de G to Roger de Marlowe, thanking him for his help and asking him to intervene in some business which the writer's brother had with the Countess.*

To his dearest friend in Christ, if he may say so, Sir R[oger] de M[arlowe] brother J de G sends such greeting as he would choose for himself. I thank you to the best of my ability, my dear sir, for the great benefits which you have conferred and still continue to confer on me and my friends. And since P de L the bearer, one of my distant kinsmen, has received many benefits, and marks of favour from you in times past, as he tells me, he is instant with me to thank you. For these and such kind actions I shall always be deeply obliged to you. If you will, be so good as to

¹ A Franciscan, chaplain to Edmund of Cornwall. See A. G. Little, "The Grey Friars in Oxford," p. 218.

take the necessary steps in the business which my brother has with the lady Countess, whenever the opportunity arises. Farewell.

- 16 *Roger de Marlowe to R de W
Testimonial for J de M, who wanted
to be ordained priest.*

A letter on behalf of poor friends.¹ To the reverend and prudent man and, if he may say so, his dearest friend R de W his servant R[oger] de M[arlowe] sends greeting in Him Who is the true safety and Saviour of the world. Since I have the greatest confidence in you, I am approaching you on behalf of a clerk, my beloved in Christ J de M, deacon, bearer of this letter. For the sake of your own kindness and of my entreaties, be so good as to give him your counsel and aid, so that in the next batch of ordinations celebrated by our lord Bishop [Simon] he may be found worthy to be raised to the priesthood by the blessed laying-on of hands with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Know that he is an honourable man, of virtuous life and good repute and that, as has already come to your notice by examination, he is sufficiently well-educated. Fare well as I would fare well.

- 17 *The abbot of Missenden to Roger de Marlowe,
excusing himself for failing to give a living to the
candidate put forward by Roger.*

To the careful and prudent man and his dearest friend Sir R[oger] de M[arlowe, M[atthew] by God's permission Abbot of Missenden sends greeting with all his duty and service, I regret to say that we cannot fulfil the request which Sir J de C recently explained to us in your name. Know that, moved by the prayers of our Lady the Queen, we had given the church of E to one of her servants on whose behalf she made a special petition to us, before your letter reached us. Farewell in the Lord.

- 18 *Letter concerning the buying of certain jewels.
A special letter.² Greeting, such as a man
would choose for himself. I understand by your*

¹ See note to No. 13.

² See note to No. 13.

letter that you have for sale three silver cups with bases and also certain jewels. I beg you, therefore, to keep them personally on my behalf until next Sunday and, if you can manage it, to come in person to me at Hambledon on the aforesaid Sunday, bringing the said goods with you. I beg you to do this for my sake. Farewell as I would fare well.

folio 38A 19

Roger de Marlowe to ? the Archdeacon of Berkshire, complaining that the Bishop of Winchester's harvesters had forced the tenants to work on a holy day, and asking that he may be punished. July, year uncertain. (1297, 1303 or 1308).

To the reverend and prudent man, etc. It is my duty to tell your discretion that last Sunday, the morrow of S. Margaret's day, H C, the Bishop of Winchester's harvester in Harwell, summoned or caused to be summoned all the tenants of the said Bishop in the said vill, ordering them to come to the park of the said Bishop immediately after nine o'clock to cart hay. For this purpose, while we were at breakfast he called them up to work by blowing a certain great horn through the whole village, as he is wont to do on working days. And this seemed to me unbearable, so I immediately sent Sir Thomas my colleague, chaplain of the parish, to prevent such work upon that day, but they would not listen to him or desist from their work. So I warned them three or four times to stop and afterwards threatened them with excommunication if they went on, but I laboured in vain, for the said H answered me mockingly that he was going to cart the hay whether I liked it or not, nor would he cease work, or permit others to cease, for my threats or warnings. I therefore, being somewhat disturbed, summoned them generally and afterwards had them summoned separately to appear before you in your chapter held on Wednesday the vigil of S. James's day, to hear and receive the sentence which your discretion should declare according to justice. Wherefore I beg your discretion to give them a suitable sentence, punishing them so that others may not be tempted by the lightness of their sentence to follow their example, and let the harvester receive punishment for habitually working on holy days and encouraging others to do the same. He is a powerful man. Farewell and good wishes.

- 20 *Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, to Raymond Gaufridi, Minister-general of the Franciscans, thanking him for presents, offering to help him in any way possible and asking for his prayers. 1293.*

To the most honourable and religious man, his reverend father and beloved kinsman brother Raymond, Minister-general of the whole Franciscan order, Edmund Earl of Cornwall sends greeting and and the good wishes of friendship in God our Saviour. I thank your excellency to the best of my ability and knowledge for the precious gifts, the wonderful knives set with coral and the noble jar of tyriac,¹ which I was greatly moved to receive from the hands of my beloved servant John Rossel on the octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. I particularly appreciate the tender love which you have shown to me in sending the said jewels from such a great distance. I should like you to understand how grateful I am for your generosity in all that you have done. Although I know truly that you are adorned with the highest authority, yet I understand that your voluntary profession renders you poor in earthly goods. Wherefore I beseech you, my kinsman, earnestly entreating you not to refrain from writing to me, as to a willing and trustworthy friend, if you lack any temporal thing, for by God's grace I will fulfil each request. Moreover I add a special entreaty that you will commend my affairs and those of the kingdoms² (about which you have no doubt heard) to the prayers of your brethren, since the danger is now very great. I recommend to you as warmly as possible my beloved servant brother John. Given at my manor of B[eckley] near Oxford, on the Feast of the Beheading of S. John Baptist, in the twenty-first year of our King's reign.

- 21 *Fragment of an unfinished letter.*

To his reverend father in Christ and, if he may say so, his lord who is most dear in all things, lord R[ichard de Clive] by God's grace Abbot of Abingdon, his servant in all things etc.

¹ Venice treacle.

² i.e. of England, France and Scotland.

folio 38B 22

Letter patent appointing a proctor.

Appointment of a proctor.¹ Be it known to all by these presents that I, B de R Rector of the church of C do ordain, make and constitute my beloved in Christ Sir J de W my true and lawful proctor in all lawsuits and all business touching my person and my church aforesaid, at all times and in all places when I happen to be away. I give and concede to him full power and a special mandate in my name and the name of my said church to act, defend, receive, reply in my name to the plea '*de veritate dicenda*,' to be sworn in and take any other lawful oath, to cite before a higher court and to appeal, to receive corporal possession of my said church in my name, to take and to obtain it, and also to induct in the said church in my name at the instigation of any person whatsoever, to receive the whole fruits, revenues and profits of the same church and to dispose of them and also arrange about them freely and to perform each and every other duty which I could perform if I were there in person. I promise and pledge myself on behalf of my said proctor that his acts will be held to be lawful and treated as binding and I offer my goods as security. In witness whereof, etc. Given etc. in the year etc.

23 *Letter patent appointing two proctors.*

Another appointment of proctors. Know all men by these presents, etc. I have made, constituted, and ordained my beloved in Christ Sir J de M and Sir R de L my proctors, together and separately, in all lawsuits and all business touching my person and my church aforesaid, before any judges, ordinaries, delegates or persons to whom they have committed authority whatsoever, when I happen to be away. I give to them, and to each of them, full power and a special mandate in my name to act, defend, appeal and prosecute appeals, receive, reply, pay taxes and take oaths in my name, to defend suits of felony and misdemeanour, to be present when necessary at holy synods and other assemblies or convocations in the presence of the ordinaries of the districts, to take the oath of obedience and to do and perform each and every thing that

¹ See note to No. 13.

a true and lawful proctor or proctors can do, or that I could do if I were present, even if it required a special mandate. I will hold any acts of the said proctors, or of one of them, to be lawful and binding and I pledge myself, offering my goods as security, on behalf of each and both of them. I declare this to all whom it may concern. Since my seal is unknown to many persons, I have obtained leave to use the seal of the Dean of C Given, etc.

24 *Letter patent appointing John de La Chapelle as proctor to be instituted to a living in the name of the writer.*

Another letter appointing a proctor to receive institution. Know all men by these presents, etc., that I, R de C, clerk, lawfully presented to the church of H in the diocese of Lincoln, do make, constitute and ordain by these presents my beloved in Christ J[ohn] de [La Chapelle] rector of the church of A[mbresden] in the aforesaid diocese my true and lawful proctor in all lawsuits and business whatsoever, touching or concerning my person before any judges, ordinaries, delegates or persons to whom they have committed their authority whatsoever. I give him general and special powers in my name to act, defend, receive, reply or to seek in my name canonical institution, commendation, possession of or induction to the said church of H or institution to any benefice whatsoever to which I may have been presented,¹ to take and obtain it, to give canonical obedience to the ordinaries and to take an oath upon the subject, also to take any form of lawful oath whatsoever and to do all other things that can be required of true and lawful proctors, to appeal and prosecute appeals. I promise and pledge myself on his behalf that his acts will be held to be lawful and treated as binding and I offer my goods as security.

folio 39A 25 *The vicar of Kirton to the Prior of Bicester and the Archdeacon of Oxford, acknowledging their command to cite the executors of the will of the Countess of Cornwall to appear at Oxford and report on their administration of the Countess's goods in the diocese of Lincoln. July 7th, 1315.*

¹ The meaning of the Latin in this passage is not very clear.

To the reverend and prudent men Sir [Roger de Cottesford] Prior of Bicester and Sir [Gailhardus de Mota] Archdeacon of Oxford, Official of our venerable father and lord in Christ, Lord John, by God's grace Bishop of Lincoln, commissioners specially deputed to hear the report of the administration by the executors of the will of Lady Margaret de Clare, formerly Countess of Cornwall, and to do all other things which are necessary in this matter, their humble and devoted servant [Hugh de Lafford de Comcestr'] Vicar of Kirton sends his duty and service with all reverence and honour. I have lately received your command in this form :—

“ The Prior of Bicester and the lord Archdeacon of Oxford, Official of our venerable father and lord in Christ Lord John, by God's grace Bishop of Lincoln, commissioners specially deputed to hear the report of the administration by the executors of the will of the Lady Margaret de Clare, Countess of Cornwall, concerning the goods which she had in the diocese of Lincoln during her life, and appointed to do all other things which are necessary in this matter, to the prudent man [Hugh de Lafford] Vicar of Kirton, greeting in the name of the Maker of goodwill. We strictly charge you by these presents, by the authority with which we are invested in this matter (an authority which we pass on in full to you) that you cause John de La Chapelle and Master Peter de Brixia, executors of the will of the said Lady Margaret, and Master Richard de Clare, deputed by the authority of the ordinary to be executor of the said will in the manor which the said late Countess had at Kirton in your locality, where the said executors are reported to have administered the will, to be summoned publicly and solemnly in the church of the said place to appear before us in the church of S. Michael at the North Gate of Oxford on the second juridical day after the Feast of S. Mary Magdalene. They shall there produce the will of the said late Countess, and a list of all the goods which she had in the diocese of Lincoln while she was alive, and all documents concerning their administration of the goods at this time, also to make answer in legal form to the creditors and legatees and to all other persons, whosoever

they may be, who are concerned in this matter by reason of the will or of the goods of the Countess in the diocese of Lincoln. They are also to render a final account of their lawful administration of the goods aforesaid. Moreover in order that all these things may be performed and received without any person failing to appear or asking for the time and place to be altered, as is just, you shall solemnly and publicly proclaim or cause to be proclaimed at High Mass on the next three Sundays or festivals after you receive this letter, in all the churches in your deanery in which it shall seem to you expedient to do so, that if there be anyone who has any request or demand to make of the said executors, he shall come to the said place on the said day to put forward his petitions and any other point of interest, and he shall plead and prosecute his suit as is right, and in this matter he shall perform and receive whatever justice and equity demand. You shall also inform us clearly and distinctly as to what you have done by your letters patent, containing a full report, on the day and in the place aforesaid. Given at Bicester, July 3rd, 1315."

I have reverently and obediently performed this your command, in witness whereof this letter is sealed with the seal of the deanery of Kirton. Given at Kirton, July 7th, in the said year.

folio 39B 26

Complaint of a fraud perpetrated in the taking of heriot and mortuary dues.

Greeting. I thank you as warmly as possible for the comfort and instinctive kindness which you have often shown to me and still continue, by holy inspiration, to show, although I regret that it is far beyond my deserts. I entreat you, however, to continue to show such kindness towards me. Since, as I think, you have already heard of the quarrel which took place between your beadle and myself last Sunday, although the report which reached you was not a true one, if I may I will tell you the truth of the matter as follows. On the said Sunday morning your beadle and I arrived separately at the house of the widow of R C de B, to choose your heriot and the mortuary due of the church and we found there one horse, one cow and

two scraggy calves. The said widow had, as I heard, hidden a mare of the value of at least half a mark, with the consent and connivance of your said beadle. From among the said animals the beadle chose as heriot in your name a cow, which he had taken away before I came, and I chose a horse in the name of the rector of the church as the mortuary due. When we had made our choice, the kinsmen of the dead man bore his body to the church, and the horse which was chosen as the mortuary due was led before the body into the churchyard, according to the custom. At this point your beadle came suddenly and seized the said horse, not because it was the widow's property but because it was the due of the church. He did so without any reason or any wrong having been done to himself, to the prejudice of the church and the dishonour and loss of the rector. Therefore I urge you as strongly as possible to allow the church to enjoy its rights and customary dues and to cease, if you will, from all such interference. Please ask me any questions you like about the matter. Farewell.

27 *Quitclaim of the executors of the will of Margaret de Clare. 1315.*

Quitclaim upon account rendered. Be it known to all the sons of holy mother church by these presents that Sir J[ohn] de [La Chapelle] and Master P[eter] de B[rixia], executors of the will of M[argaret] de C[lare] Countess of Cornwall, legally appointed administrators of the goods of the said lady with the help of Master R[ichard] de Clare, and Master R[ichard] de Clare aforesaid, assistant executor, were summoned to appear before us, [Roger de Cottesford] Prior of Bicester and Sir [Gailhardus de Mota] Archdeacon of Oxford and the Official of Lord John by God's grace Bishop of Lincoln, commissioners specially appointed in this matter, at the church of S. Michael at the North Gate of Oxford on the Thursday after the feast of the Blessed Mary Magdalene, 1315, to give an account of their administration of the goods which the said lady had in the diocese of Lincoln while she was alive. The aforesaid John, priest, and the aforesaid Masters Peter and Richard appeared before us in answer to our first citation at the appointed time and place in the person of Master Elias of S. Alban's their duly appointed proctor and gave a full account of

the will of the said lady and an inventory of all the goods which she had in the diocese of Lincoln during her lifetime, which were valued at seven hundred and thirty-three pounds nine shillings and three farthings, and all the documents referring to their administration of the said goods. Proclamations and citations had already been issued according to law to creditors, legatees and all other persons who might be in any way concerned, that they should appear before us at the said time and place to produce their petitions and any other matter concerning the said executors and their assistant and to be ready to plead and prove and prosecute their case, and to do and receive whatever might be right in this matter. None, however, appeared although they had due warning and were allowed the lawful delay, so the executors handed in the final account of their administration according to law, observing each and every legal formality which is right and lawful in such a case as this. We, the said commissioners, after faithful calculation and minute investigation, taking everything into consideration and making all necessary allowances, found that the said executors and their assistant had duly paid out, in the expenses for the funeral of the said lady in the diocese of Lincoln and in legacies which were to be paid in the said diocese and in other necessary expenses touching the affairs of the said lady in the said diocese, all the goods which the said lady had in the said diocese during her lifetime, the sum of which is set down in full above, moreover they had spent an extra sum of twenty pounds, three shillings and three farthings. We found that they had lawfully administered the said goods in all things and we highly commend their faithfulness and diligence in these matters. By the authority committed to us in this matter we do release them from their aforesaid administration and from being summoned to produce their accounts and from all other responsibilities whatsoever in the matter of the said will or of their administration of the said goods. We declare by these presents that they are altogether free and quit of responsibility, granting and reserving to them, however, the power to seek and receive the said sum of twenty pounds, three shillings and three farthings from the goods belonging to the said lady in another diocese. In

witness whereof we the Prior of Bicester have affixed our seal, which we use, and we the lord Archdeacon of Oxford, Official of the Bishop of Lincoln, have affixed the seal of our office. Given on the day and in the year and at the place aforesaid.

folio 40A 28

The Official of the Archdeacon of Oxford to the Dean of B, concerning the punishments of some persons who were infringing the rights of the church. 1313.

The Official of Oxford to the prudent man Dean of B, greeting in the name of the Maker of goodwill. A complaint has lately come to our ears that certain parishioners of the church of A have dared, being turned to wickedness, to upset, pervert, infringe and disturb the rights and liberties of the said church by their malice, by taking away the mortuary dues which are owing by good custom to the said church, to the great peril of their souls and the scandal of many persons. Therefore, since we wish to call back those who are subject to us into the way of truth, lest they perish through sliding by weakness into sin and error, we charge and strictly command you to go in person to the church of A on some Sunday or holy day, taking with you a suitable number of rectors, vicars and parish chaplains from the neighbourhood if necessary and having called for silence before the reading of the Gospel in the said church, you shall publicly warn each and every person who infringes the rights and liberties of the said church or interferes with them in any way whatsoever, or who takes away mortuary dues unjustly, as it is said, or who keeps anything belonging to the church, according to the information which you have received, that he shall henceforth cease altogether from such presumption and disturbance and make as complete and speedy restitution as possible, as he is bound to do, to the said church of all things which he has taken away or kept. Otherwise by the aforesaid canonical ordinance you shall excommunicate or cause to be excommunicated each and every one of these evil-doers, who are hateful to God, and all those who with full knowledge support them, with tolling bells and lighted candles in the church of A at High Mass on the three Sundays after you receive

these presents. Let us know what you have done by your letters patent containing a full account of the matter, since the Rector of the said church has asked us to inform him. Given at ? Newnham, June 12th, 1313.

- 29 *The Official of the Archdeacon of Oxford to the Dean of Cuddesdon, ordering, on the authority of the Abbot of Oseney, the collection of a subscription from the clergy. (? 1303).*

The Official of Oxford to the prudent man Dean of Cuddesdon greeting in the name of the Maker of goodwill. We straitly charge you in the name of the Abbot of Oseney to issue a peremptory summons to all clergy both regular and secular in your deanery, who owe money¹ for the support of the papal nuncios, to appear before the said Abbot at Oseney on September 11th next, to pay without delay fourpence on each mark of their ecclesiastical benefices, according to the regular taxation of the tenth granted for the support of nuncios sent into England by the Lord Pope from the apostolic see. You shall declare to them that if they do not make the said payment at the said time and place they do thereby incur the sentence of excommunication by the nuncios themselves. Let us know what you have done in the said matter, by your letters patent containing a full report, which should reach us before the feast of the Nativity of Our Blessed Lady. Given at Oxford, August 5th.

¹ *Ad procuracionem tenentur.*