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978-1-108-05241-2 - *Litterae Cantuarienses: The Letter Books of the Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury*: Volume 3

Edited by J. Brigstocke Sheppard

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Litterae Cantuarienses: The Letter Books of the Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury

Christ Church, Canterbury, was the seat of the archbishop and an important pilgrimage site. The letters and other documents in its register reveal not only its history, but how complex was the management of the priory and its estates. This three-volume edition is based on a transcript of the register compiled in 1411 and continued thereafter. Volume 3, edited by Joseph Brigstocke Sheppard (1827–95) and published in 1889, contains items 944–1119, ranging in date from 1375 to 1536. The editor has selected documents addressed to individuals or groups, and the subjects vary widely. Most relate to church affairs, including formal letters of appointment and items addressing building work. Others are financial, dealing with rents, taxes and problems with property in Ireland. The texts are in Latin, Norman French and English, with translations provided for the French documents. Appendices and a general index to the three volumes are also included.

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Literae Cantuarienses

The Letter Books of the Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury

VOLUME 3

EDITED BY
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RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI
SCRIPTORES,

OR

CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND

DURING

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THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

On the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

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The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each Chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,
December 1857.*

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LITERÆ CANTUARIENSES.

THE LETTER BOOKS

OF THE

MONASTERY OF CHRIST CHURCH,
CANTERBURY.

VOL. III.

EDITED BY

J. BRIGSTOCKE SHEPPARD, LL.D.

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Arch-
 bishop
 Arundel.

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self-effacement, and abstention from political action, was, during the troubled 15th century, the result of a well-chosen policy, rather than of personal inanity.

The friendship which existed between Archbishop Arundel and the Chapter of his cathedral church caused him to write two confidential letters to them, but although they, without doubt, sympathised with him in his troubles, they were not called upon to act as his champions, and in putting his letters upon record by copying them into their register, they showed the writer all the respect which he looked for.

Before Arundel's disgrace with Richard II., he required the Prior to cause processions to be made and prayers to be offered for the success of the King's expedition to Ireland; but, as it is probable that the Head of every religious House in England was ordered by his Bishop to do the same, no specially fervent loyalty can be inferred from the issuing of this mandate; but when in a letter of 1396 the Archbishop and the Prior unconditionally place both their personal services and all their worldly possessions at the King's disposal, if subsequent history did not contradict the supposition, it might be believed that the offer was made in a spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to the King's cause. Richard gracefully thanks the Churchmen for their offer, but there is no evidence existing to show that he availed himself of it, and the exile of the Archbishop in the next year of course annulled his promise. During his banishment the Archbishop wrote a letter from the "Earthly Paradise near Florence" in a style which implied that he was on terms of confidential intimacy with the Prior; but, although there is a suggestion of a hope of better times to come, the exact drift of the letter is, probably purposely, obscured by the verbose phrases, by which the writer conceals, rather than expresses, his meaning.

In the narrative part of that letter, in which Archbishop Arundel reports that he has escaped a trap laid for him

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by the nobles who rebelled against Henry IV., in the first year of his reign, his story is clear and distinct; but farther on when, trusting to the ability of his correspondent to read between the lines, he writes as it were in cypher, he becomes unintelligible to modern readers. It is more than probable that the Archbishop exaggerated the guilt of his nephew, whom he charges with attempted sacrilege and quasi-parricide; for in going, as he says he did, from Croydon to the King at Windsor, he would pass Kingston, which at the time was in possession of the rebel forces, in which case his danger would have been great enough, without the additional treachery of an ambuscade especially contrived, as the writer insinuates, by the Earl of Kent to entrap him. The circumstances by which the Archbishop was endangered were shortly these. The Earls of Huntingdon, Kent, and Salisbury, partizans of the dethroned Richard, invited the King to a tournament at Oxford on 3rd January, intending to treasonably assassinate him; but he, being warned, fled from Windsor to London, where his party was predominant, whereupon the conspirators on the next day, 4th January, made a dash at Windsor Castle, which they captured. On this same day the Archbishop, believing that the King was still at Windsor, set out from his palace at Croydon to join him, and on the way approached Kingston-on-Thames, where he had prepared to pass the night, but finding the place in the hands of rebel soldiers he turned aside and escaped without being recognized. In all this, and whatever else the letter contains, there is nothing except the Archbishop's denunciation of the "parricide" to connect the Earl of Kent with the occurrence; nor does it appear that he had any notice of his uncle's journey. The uncle's savage rejoicing over the Earl's death at Cirencester would lead one to think that there was no more love on the side of the uncle than the latter asserts

b 2

there was on the part of the nephew. The *Sancta Rusticitas*—the rural levy hastily called up by the mayor of Cirencester, by which the Earls were captured and killed—is not easily translated in a serious or dignified form, and seems to be about equivalent to “The Blessed Mob,” a not unimportant political factor.

p. 138. A letter, addressed from the Convent to Archbishop Chicheley, shows that he was in attendance upon the King towards the end of his campaign in France in 1419 ; after which there is in the letters no reference to politics, until, in 1435, the Chapter are required to make intercession for the success of the negotiations, by which it was hoped that the ambassadors, assembled at Arras, might be able to establish a lasting peace between England and France. In the exordium of his letter, Archbishop Chicheley bemoans the desolating war, which, for twenty years, had drained England and ravaged France, apparently forgetting that in order to divert the young King from mischievous innovations he had himself given a more than passive approval to the first invasion. The Congress of Arras bore no good fruit, as far as England and France were concerned, and the war went on as before. The French historian reports :

Monstrelet (Buchon), III. 178. Le dix-neuvième jour d’Aoust vint le Cardinal de Vincestre en la Ville d’Arras ; pour en être au parlement là etant ; et étoient la en sa compagnie la Counte de Huntingdon et autres notables, chivaliers, et ecuyers, d’Angleterre, jusques au nombre de trois cents chevaucheurs Le sixième jour de Septembre le Cardinal de Vincestre se partit de la Convention d’Arras . . . sans ce qu’ils eussent aucune concorde avec les Francois, etc.

p. 176. In 1443, whilst a congress was discussing the project of a truce at Tours, Charles VII. courteously assisted the journey of Margaret of Anjou, whom Suffolk was escorting to England through territory held by the King of France. It is not easy to guess, why, when so many more important historical events were passed over,

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this comparatively trifling letter should have been copied into the records of the Convent.

This remark does not apply to the two proclamations ^{p. 205.} of pardon offered to the followers of Jack Cade; for the bulk of his men being the "Commons of Kent," many of the tenants and villeins of the Monastery must have been involved in the rebellion, and therefore the question of a general amnesty must have been one of great interest to the Chapter, who were owners of so many Kentish manors.

The last document by which any considerable event in the history of the kingdom is illustrated in these letters, is a remarkable speech addressed on behalf of ^{p. 274.} the Crown to a Parliament, assembled under William Alyngton, the Speaker. In the register, where it is entered among documents of 1474, this speech has no title or date attached to it; but internal evidence leads to the conclusion that it refers to that invasion of France which Edward IV. in person undertook in 1475, and which led to the treaty of Picquigny, by which a seven years' truce was agreed upon between England and France.

For some years before, Edward had been contriving an alliance with the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, with a view to the humiliation, if not the annihilation, of Louis XI., and at the time of the delivery of the speech here printed, the alliance, as the orator declared, had taken a definite form.

The treaty by which the Duke of Burgundy formally bound himself to the enterprise was dated 25th July ^{Comines, Liv. IV. 1.} 1474, but a general understanding between the Powers had been previously arrived at, and only the English constitutional forms delayed the execution of their projects by the allies.

"Mais (en Angleterre) les choses sont longues, car le Roy ne peut entreprendre un tel œuvre sans assembler son parlement, qui vaut autant à dire comme les Trois Estats

Quand lest Estats sont assemblez, il declaro son intention, et demande aide sur ses sujets, car il ne leve nuls aids in Angleterre si ce n'est pas pour passer en France ou aller en Ecosse, ou autres faits semblables Et est bien une pratique que ces Roys d'Angleterre font quand ils veulent amasser argent, que faire semblant d'aller en Ecosse ou en France, et faire armées: et pour lever grand argent, ils font un payement de trois mois, et puis rompent leur armée, et s'en retournent a l'hostel, et ils ont receu l'argent pour un an. Et ce Roy Edouard estoit bien plein de cette pratique, et souvent le fit."

By the treaty the King of France was declared to be a public enemy; it was proposed to recognize Edward as King of France; whilst many important advantages were promised to the Duke of Burgundy, who moreover proposed to assume the position of an independent sovereign.

An examination of the Rolls of Parliament proves quite clearly, that the grant by which the King was enabled to raise his army, was passed in the House of Commons on the 18th July 1474, and that it was the response made by the Parliament to the speech here printed, which was delivered a month before.

Parry's
 "Parliaments."

The Parliament first assembled on 20 January 1474, on 1st February it was prorogued to 9th May and then sat until 28th May, adjourned to 6th June, sat until July 18th, when the grant was passed, adjourned to 23rd January 1475, and, after sitting until 14th March, it was dissolved; having endured longer than any Parliament up to the date.

In the Roll is the

"Memorandum, quod Communes Regni Angliæ, in præsentī Parlamento existentes, et coram Domino Rege in pleno Parlamento prædicto, decimo octavo die Julii dicto anno quarto-decimo, comparentes, per Willelmum Alyngton Prolocutorem suum declarabant, qualiter ipsi, de avisamento et assensu dominorum spiritualium et temporalium in eodem parlamento existentium, ad Dei honorem et dicti Domini Regis assistentiam, pro celeri atque necessaria dicti regni Angliæ, subditorumque communitatis ejusdem, defensione, concesserunt

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præfato Domino Regi unam quintamdecimam et decimam, exceptis sex millibus librarum inde deducendis, in partem contentationis et solutionis vadium tresdecim millium hominum sagittariorum, nuper in dicto Parlamento eidem Domino Regi, per præfatos Communes, penes quamdam armatam per ipsum Dominum Regem, concessorum sub certis conditionibus et exceptionibus, in quadam sedula indentata, inde per præfatos Communes confecta et eidem Domini Regi tunc ibidem exhibita, contentis. Et ulterius iidem Communes, eodem die, per dictum Prolocutorem suum similiter declarabant, qualiter ipsi, de avisamento et assensu prædictis, per eandem cedulam indentatam concesserunt eidem Domino Regi summam quinquaginta et unius millium centum quadraginta et septem librarum, quatuor solidorum, septem denariorum, oboli et quadrantis, in plenam satisfactionem dicti concessionis tresdecim millium hominum, ad plenam contentationem et solutionem omnium vadiorum eorundem hominum, sub certis formis, conditionibus, et exceptionibus, et ad certos terminos in dicta cedula indentata contentos, levandam, percipiendam, et solvendam. Cedula indentata sequitur in hæc verba."

Hereupon follows the schedule containing the many conditions, limitations, and exceptions imposed upon the King as conditions for the passing of the grant; after which follows a long *declaration* in English, exhorting and admonishing the King; and especially remarkable because it repeats many of the quaint phrases and unusual verbal combinations which occur in the speech under consideration: for example:

"Ye verily then entending, at dyvers tymes, by the mouth of youre Chauncellors for the tyme beyng, hath to us be declared and shewed, that ye, of youre pryncly and knyghtly corage, in youre owne persone, with all diligence to youre Highnes possible, all bodily case laide aparte, wolde resiste the said confident malice of youre and owre said enemyes, in setting outward a myghte arme, hable, by the help of God, to resiste and subdue the same enemyes, so that your said Highnes myght of us have lovyng assistance, etc."

Here it will be seen in several cases the very words of the speech are reflected; and, in continuation, the *declaration* goes on to explain how the Chancellor during the

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session beginning on the sixth of June had explained the King's intentions and asked for a subsidy :

“ . . . Fro the which twentieth day of January, this present Parliament, by dyvers prorogations, hath be contynued unto the sixth day of June the fourteenth yere of yowre noble reign : atte which day and sithen, by the mouth of yowre Chauncellor of Englonde, it hath be opened and shewed to us youre said Comens in this present Parliament, that youre knyghtly corage entended, and entendith, to hold the said viage roiall in youre owne roiall persone, in as goodly hast as shall pleas God.”

Here again it appears that the person who made the appeal to the Parliament for the grant was the Chancellor of England, and that in the granting of the application the Commons used the same forms of words as are found in the speech which is copied in the Canterbury register. It may, therefore, be safely concluded that this speech is an authentic transcript of that which the Chancellor pronounced on the sixth of June 1474 ; nor is there any difficulty in explaining the occurrence of a copy at Canterbury. The Chancellor was Thomas Rotherham, first, Bishop of Rochester, then, and at the time when the speech was made, Bishop of Lincoln, and finally, Archbishop of York. He appears, from the registers of Christ Church, to have been a legal adviser of the Convent for many years before he became a Bishop, and in 1465, nine years before he delivered the oration in question, the Chapter showed their appreciation of his merits by electing him, together with Alice Rotherham his mother, to full confraternity with their society. Hence as an ex-counsel of the Monastery, as Bishop of the adjoining diocese which was always intimately associated with that of Canterbury, and as an adopted brother of the Chapter, it may readily be believed that the Chancellor was a personal friend of the Prior, to whom he was likely to present a copy of his great speech, even possibly his own draft ; which the Prior would be laudably proud to enrol in his register.

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The expedition commanded by Edward himself, in fulfilment of his promise to the Commons, landed at Calais in June 1475, the ships for its transport being furnished by the Duke of Burgundy, who, however, crippled by the unsuccessful siege of Nuys, was unable to furnish any land force. From the outset Louis showed himself inclined to treat rather than to fight; he sent liberal presents of food and wine to the enemy's camp, and he even compromised, if he did not corrupt, by extravagant presents the very herald who carried Edward's defiance. Very soon a meeting between the Kings was arranged, which took place in the middle of the bridge of Picquigny, and a treaty was made, by which peace for seven years was promised, and a large indemnity, with an annuity, assigned to Edward sent him home rejoicing to England.

In the introduction to the first volume of these Letters, ^{The Wine of St. Thomas.} the history of the Wine of St. Thomas—the hundred *nuys* given yearly by Louis VII., to the Convent of Christ Church—was brought down to the end of the 14th century. It was there shown that in times of peace the Convent was able to collect and sell its wine at Triel and Poissy, but that when France and England were at war the delivery of the wine ceased; the last occasion upon which an attempt was made to obtain it being in 1367, when there was a prospect of a rupture of the seven years of peace which followed the treaty of Bretigny.

In the present volume no allusion is made to the wine until the year 1419. It is probable that during the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. it was duly received, but that the payment came to an end with the invasion of France by Henry V. Four years after the battle of Agincourt when Henry had captured Rouen, the King's party with John Duke of Burgundy on the one hand, and the opponent party of the Dauphin on the other, were both tentatively approaching the matter of an alliance with the English King. A preference was

given to the former, and according to Monstrelet:
 “ environ la mi-Avril les ambassadeurs du Roi d'Angle-
 “ terre, qui naguère avoient été a Provins, retournerent
 “ devers le Roi de France et le Duc de Bourgogne en la
 “ Ville de Troyes en Champagne. Auquel lieu fut tant
 “ traité entre les deux parties q'une trêve fut faite entre
 “ les deux rois, certaine espace de temps.” This truce
 led to a meeting at Meulan on the Seine, and there a
 firm alliance between the Kings was agreed upon. At
 this time Archbishop Chicheley was in the King's train
 and acted the part of a watchful friend towards the
 Canterbury Chapter; for even before the end of March,
 in anticipation of a resumption of the delivery of the
 wine in case of the establishment of friendly relations
 between the Kings, they sent over one of the most digni-
 fied of their monks, who was empowered to receive and
 deal with it. It is probable that their suit was success-
 ful, for at the end of 1420 they sent a letter of thanks
 to the Archbishop, acknowledging his zeal in this matter
 among others.

p. 138.

It may naturally be supposed that when the Dauphin
 whose friendship the English had rejected became
 King, as Charles VII., the gift of wine was suspended,
 and accordingly nothing more is heard of it until the
 year 1444, when the truce which preceded the mar-
 riage of Henry VI. to Margaret of Anjou again gave
 the Chapter an excuse for soliciting the French King.

p. 189.

On this occasion they approached him through his
 cousin the Duke of Orleans, possibly founding their
 hopes on the goodwill expressed by Charles in the
 letter to Henry here printed, but, as the truce between
 the countries was of short duration, it is likely that
 no good result followed the solicitation.

p. 176.

The year 1477 was remarkable in the history of the
 Wine of St. Thomas; in the first place, because the
 records of the Monastery contain at that date more
 information on the subject than at any other, and

Henry V.,
 Act 1, Sc.
 2.