

Letters of John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, and Archbishop Neville to the University of Oxford

The letters printed here are taken from a register, which belonged to Archbishop Warham, in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.¹ Less correct transcripts of the two letters of Archbishop Neville are inserted on the front fly-leaf of a copy of Charles Maneken's *Epistolares formulae* (Louvain, 1476) in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.² None of the letters are entered in Register F in the university archives which was edited by Mr. Anstey in 1898 for the Oxford Historical Society, which, however, seems to contain the answer to no. i and the letter to which no. iii is the answer. The year of Tiptoft's letter from Padua is given as 1468 in the margin (in a later hand), which could only be old style, for the earl was in Ireland in January 1468. But, though 1468 is a blank year in his biography, there are serious objections to the supposition that he spent it in Italy. The terms of the letter point rather to 1460, when he is known to have been living at Padua.³ His allusion to the political troubles in England and the uncertainty of his return thither is only intelligible at the earlier date. The recommendation to study Latin as an aid to diplomatic employment perhaps contains a reference to his own appointments as 'Orator et nuncios specialis' to Pope Calixtus III in 1457 and to the council of Mantua in 1459. These indications of earlier date than that assigned in the manuscript are confirmed by the existence in Register F of a letter dated 1 April 1460, which, though without address, is clearly to Tiptoft, and almost certainly the answer of the university to that here printed. It refers to 'vna in nos nuperrima largitas', mentions 'vna Patavia', and seems to quote from the letter in the passage 'quod non solum apud Italos quos omnis eloquentie principis aie', &c.⁴

The error in the date may perhaps be traced to approximation to those of Neville's letters. The archbishop's first letter is dated in the margin, apparently by the scribe who entered it, 'anno domini 1469'. His second has not the year supplied, but it must be either 1470 or 1471, for after the latter year he was never again at Westminster in November until 1475, which seems too late. The letter in which the university begged his help in recovering the books which Tiptoft had given, the value of

¹ 423, nos. 42, 43, 44, ff. 65-8.

² Press-mark 17276. I am indebted to M. Rawler for aid in deciphering these transcripts and to Mr. Strickland Gibson of the Bodleian Library for the loan of rotographs of the Corpus register.

³ Taland, *Commentari de Scripseribus Britannicis* (1700), ii. 478; *Decl. of Nat. Hist.* vi. 413.

⁴ *Epistolae Academicæ Oxon.*, ed. Anstey, no. 239 (ff. 354).

which they estimated at about 500 marks,¹ was written on 5 November 1470, eighteen days after the earl's execution, and if Neville was able to announce his success in securing the books (save those in Ireland) within a fortnight, he must have been very expeditious. The absence in his letter of any reference to the university's appeal rather points to a later date.

The post for which the archbishop gave Robert Canon so strong a recommendation was probably that of bedel, if John Cane (or Caine) is the same person as the John Cane (or Caan) who was appointed to that office in 1433,² and occurs as late as 1457.³ The identification seems to be made practically certain by a letter from Edward IV to the university commanding it not to proceed to the election of a bedel until the coming of the archbishop of York, their chancellor.⁴ Nothing is known of Canon. It is a little disappointing to find from notes prefixed (in a different hand) to the two letters in the John Rylands volume that Archbishop Neville was not responsible for their latinity. The first was written by the archdeacon of Richmond,⁵ who was John Shirwood, afterwards bishop of Durham, and the second by an unidentified fellow of Balliol College, named Bulke.⁶ But though they do not raise the previous estimate of Neville's learning, they supply interesting confirmation of his attachment to the university and his literary tastes. JAMES TAIT.

MS. C.C.C.C. 423, ff. 65-6.

He litere misse sunt ad vniuersitatem Oxonie a comite Wycornie.

Amplissimo viro domino cancellario Oxonie necnon vniuersitati colendis-

¹ *Ibid.* no. 289 (ff. 389). No. 280 is an appeal to Walter Lyhart, bishop of Norwich, to aid them in building, under other, a new library, as they have no place suitable to house Tiptoft's books.

² *Memoriele Akademie Oxon.* (Rolls Series) ii. 321.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 687-8.

⁴ The letter runs as follows: 'To owre vniuersite off Oxforde. To owre vniuersite off Oxforde.

'Trusty and welholowyd we grete you welle and here we vnderstonde that a grete diuision is lately axress among you for thelection off a bedelle and thereupon inconuenientia (?) be dowryd to falle withoute the more healy remedye be provided. We therefore stryde charge and commaunde you to se that the master off the sayd election abyde in suspense in any wise vnto the comyng thydre off the most reuerend leader in godde and owre ryght entyrie belowyd countr tharchibishop off Yorke yourre chawncelour whych by goddis mercy shalle not layle to be with you for that cause by the fawte off Saint Hillarys bakke comyng to ordayne and set due redress in the same and that ye prync you in vntermost devoyre and se that owre pece be surely kept in the mean tyme se ye wol eschere vnto vs at yourre peyrl. Xyrre vnder owre signet at owre Palois off Westminster the xv day off decembyr.' (MS. 423, C.C.C.C. Cambridge, fo. 37.)

⁵ *Epistolae transmissae per presobitem [viri] archiepiscopum Eboracensem Georgium Nevill, ex compositione samon magistri mei archidiaconi Richmondii: granuillamo,* &c. (see in heading).

⁶ *Ex compositione Magistri Bulke quondam socii collegii de Balliolo.*

sine Ioannes comes Wygornie salutem plurimam dicit. Tameñ peregri-
 na in terra, multumque a vestro semota coelo, nos aliquamdiu obuersati
 sumus, nunquam tamen, viri prestantissimi, eo obliuioni apud nos venire
 potuistis quin in medijs etiam curis sepe numero de vobis cogitarem et
 iocundissime sermonem facerem. Quippe scientissimam vestram, ino-
 nam, vniuersitatem in ea veneratione habeo atque a primis, vt Greci
 aiunt, vnguiculis semper habui vt haud eciam quidam sit quod maiore
 vel obseruatione vel pietate prosequi possem. Itaque quotiens in mentem
 venit (venit autem quam sepius) aliquando me de vestro, vt sic loquar,
 grege fuisse non possum profecto quin pre gaudio gestiam. Nec sane
 vniquam Socrates sibi ipsi gauisus est magis aut summo rerum opifici
 gratias egit vberiores quod non barbarum set Grecum se nesci contigerit
 quam ego quod inter vos omni et doctrina et virtute predictos annos aliquot
 idque Oxonie, quasi alteris Athenis, liberalibus disciplinis optimisque
 artibus incubuerim. Quare non me fugit, viri excellentissimi, quo in vos
 animo esse debeam, cui tam singulare necessitudinis vinculum vobiscum
 intercedit. Quod etiam in anteacta vita cum priuatis tum publicis negotijs
 prepediti nostram hanc erga vos pietatem non satis manifestare potuimus,
 tamen si superis visum erit vt patriam terram quandoque repetam et
 aliquem in republica salua me esse contigerit, non dubitabo me vobis
 eam magnitudine crebritateque officiorum notari et illustrem effecturum.
 Verum vicinque res nostre satis transigentur hos libros quorum indices
 vobis mitto in monumentum et pignus amoris nostri perpetuo penes vos
 residere volo. Quorum profecto lectioni si iugiter impendatis operam,
 amisse Latine lingue dignitatem, qua prieci Britannii, maiores nostri,
 floruerunt, recuperabitis et plurimarum rerum noticia ad beatam vitam
 instituendam plurimum abundabit. Perindeque in eos viros facile
 euasuri essetis de quorum grauissimo cocti, quotiens rerum oportunitas
 exigeret, serenissimus ac metuendissimus Rex noster tales delegat oratores
 quales postea quam ad Ytalos, omnis eloquentie princeps, accesserunt,
 non infimum dicendi genus optinere videantur. Ex Patavio septimo
 kalendas Februarias.

Vestre dignitati studiosissimus
 Ioannes comes Wygornie

[Monogram.¹]

II

MS. C.C.C.C. 423, ff. 68-69.

Grauisimo, eruditissimoque ac ornatissimo cetui magistrorum regen-
 tium alme vniuersitatis Oxonie.

Clarissimi ac literatissimi viri nostrique in Christo carissimi fratres
 salutem. Ea a puero in alma nostram matrem Oxoniam caritate pietate
 teque fuimus vt ipsius comodo et honore nichil nobis optabilis esset,
 nichil antiquius arbitrauerim. Itaque in animum indurimus nostrum non
 modo vniuersam Oxoniensem rem publicam permixtissime facere, verum etiam
 singulos honestarum ac preclararum quarumlibet facultatum professores
 et magistros fraternam affectione complecti, et quibus decuerit honoribus
 prosequi. Quod autem id non tantum haecenus apparuerit enituerique

¹ Similar to that figured in Doyle's *Official Bearings*, iii. 720.

quantum intus habetur in pectore, turbulentissimis fragoribus, quibus
 nostrum quatur seculum, ascribendum est. Hunc igitur animum nostrum
 clarissimi ac literatissimi viri in sese reflectentes et eius ardentissimam
 caritatem in ipsam morum sententiarumque parentem Oxoniam inque vos
 singulos intuentes, vestrique¹ in nos beneuolentis freti, humanitates
 vestras petimus et rogamus quatinus Robertum Canon eo officio donare
 dignemini quod Ioannes Cane² nuper optinuit. Ipsum enim Robertum,
 cuius fidelitatem in omnes, precipuam in nos obseruantiam ac amorem
 eximium erga prelatam omnium nostrorum genetricem aduertimus,
 quique est, ut arbitramur, satis pro eo munere literatus, ac natu iam
 grandior, istic vbi magnam et meliorem (vt aiunt) partem consumpsit
 etatis, quod superest cui transigere vehementer affectat, ad illud officium
 magnopere cupimus promoueri. Vestras igitur iterum atque iterum
 humanitates maiorem in modum quesimus et oramus vt ipse Robertus
 et mentorum suorum et nostrarum precum intuitu non paciatur repulsam.
 Si autem quod tantopere cupimus prout confidimus impetrabitur, dabimus
 operam quatinus ea vestris humanitatibus gratia referatur, vt morem
 nostre voluntati gessisse merito non peniteat. Et optime semper valeat
 vester ille crudelissimus atque grauissimus cetus, clarissimi atque ornatissi-
 mi viri nostrique in Christo dilectissimi fratres. Raptim ex manerio
 nostro de More kalendas Decembris.

Vestri amantissimus
 G^{ns} Eboracensis.

III

MS. C.C.C.C. 423, ff. 68v-69.

Doctissimis ac pertissimis viris nostrisque in Christo carissimis filiis,
 doctoribus et magistris regeñtibus vniuersitatis Oxonie.

Pertissimis viris magistris et doctoribus Oxonie vniuersitatis Georgius
 Eboracensis salutem plurimam dicit. Equidem semper a tenera, fere
 puerili, etate omnem meam laborem, omnem operam, curam, studiumque
 adhibui vt quos possem libros in omni disciplinarum genere compararem,
 propter quod non modo plectrosque, et puer et adulescens, scribi feci, sed
 quicquid pecunie sponere parca frugalitas potuit codicibus ipsis
 coemendis absumpsi. Nullam enim magis dignam atque preclaram
 suppellectilem parari michi posse existimabam; vocibus pleni antiquitatis,
 exemplis pleni, moribus pleni, pleni legibus, pleni religione, viuunt, conuer-
 santur, loquantur nobiscum tempore, docent nos, instruunt, consolantur,
 resque a memoria nostra remotissimas quasi presentes nobis exhibent.
 Tanta est memoria potestas, tanta dignitas, tanta magestas, tantum denique
 munimen vt nisi libri forent rudes omnes essemus atque indocti, nullam
 fere preferitarum rerum memoriam, nullum excmplum, nullam denique
 nec humanarum nec diuinarum rerum cognitionem haberemus, eadem
 vna que hominum corpora³ contegit etiam nos obrueret. Quamuis autem
 huic rei toto animo semper incubuerim, ardentiori tamen studio post
 domini Iohannis Wigornie olim comitis obitum meas vires industriamque

¹ The Rylands copy has *ficticia de before vestrique*.

² Canez, manuscript, but the first *e* is deleted; *Canez*, Rylands copy.

³ *homini corpora*, Rylands.

vanni Margheriti; e domandò il dottore, in chi ella fu rimessa, quello ch' egli aveva a rispondere. Disse, avere veduto questo caso, e che di ragione egli l' aveva potuto fare. Turbossi assai il re di questa risposta, parendogli che costui tenesse mano a questo inganno. Istette alquanto sopra di sè; di poi si volse, e disse che condannava il rettore di Zamora a restituire ogni cosa a questo gentile uomo, e più, tutte le spese che aveva fatto nel tempo che v' era stato a sollecitare le sua ragioni. Di poi condannava il dottore alle forche per questo inganno che aveva fatto. Di poi si volse a quello dottore in chi ella fu rimessa, e disse: io ti gastigherò in modo che tu imparerai a dare i giudicii. Al gentile uomo fu restituito ogni cosa, e il dottore fu impiccato a una cavezza al collo. Data questa sentenza, il vescovo d' Elva si volse al re, e si gli disse: già non arebbe data nè Bartolo nè Baldo una sentenza altrimenti che s' abbi data la Maestà vostra.

V. — È stato assai operato questo cardinale, ambasciadore in più luoghi dal papa e dal re Giovanni. Venne ambasciadore a Firenze, nel tempo che il duca Giovanni era nel Reame, e avevano occupato buona parte, mandato dal re Giovanni a richiedere a' Fiorentini dell' osservanza de' capitoli che avevano col re Ferdinando, per l' obbligo fatto colla maestà del re Alfonso per sua redi e successori; e al re Ferdinando erano obbligati come suo rede. Giugnendo in Firenze, sendo io con lui nell' andare a sporre l' ambasciata, presi securtà di domandarlo com' egli la voleva esporre, o in latino o in volgare. Dissemi averla ordinata latina. Rispuosi, che rispetto che v' erano pochi che sapèssino latino, che si farebbe più frutto a farla volgare. Andò in palazzo dov' era la Signoria e collegi e molti richiesti, e ispose elegantemente la sua orazione volgare, di natura che ne fu assai lodato e commendato, e del modo del parlare, sendo ultramontano, e della sua prudenza. Fece ogni cosa che potè in persuadere la Signoria e i cittadini circa l' osservanza de' detti capitoli, in prestare favore al re come erano obbligati; soddisfeciono poi in qualche parte. Andò di poi a Roma al pontefice, e ritornò a Napoli; di poi in Catalogna, dove nella perdita di Barzalona s' affaticò assai in comportare quegli accordi, e fu cagione di moltissimo bene, come sempre era suta sua natura. Venne