IV. *A Letter from the Rev. John Bowle, F. A. S. on the Canonization of St. Osmund, with some Observations concerning the Episcopus Puerorum, addressed to the Bishop of Salisbury.*

Read June 28, 1787.

MY LORD,

I HAVE for some time past formed to myself an opinion that among the several prelates in the see of Salisbury, no one from the foundation of the church was more active and vigilant than your noble predecessor *Richard Beauchamp*, who was translated thither in August 1450. An early undertaking of his was the canonization of *St. Osmund*. It appears that two canons of the church, Nicholas Upton, and Simon Houchins, were sent to Pope Nicholas V. to Rome, where they arrived the 27th of June, 1450. Upon this business Upton returned the following year, being recalled by the Dean and Chapter in May, and the whole devolved upon Houchins. A work of this kind was not to be finished hastily : length of time and much money were essentially necessary. The latter appears from Houchins's Letters, which were collected into a volume, so damaged by damp, that Sir Edward Byrke could with difficulty make out the two paragraphs he has published from them in
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the preface to his edition of “Upton de re militari [a].” The former, from a true state of the matter. It took up near three years in the papacy of the abovementioned pontiff, who died March 14, 1455, and was not finally adjusted till his successor Calixtus III. Sept 5, 1456, promulged his decree for that purpose. The canonization was afterwards on the 1st day of the following year, as appears from the “Portiforium ad usum Sarisburiensis ecclesiæ pars festivalis, Lond. 1556, 4to. fig. D. d. ii. Within this year as it appears in the office *in translatione sancti Osmundi*, July 15, the translation of his body was completed, principally at the expence of the bishop, “*Adjunctis sibi decano & fratribus paratissimis ejusdem loci canonicis, quorum impensis, devotione, ac industria elaboratum est.*” At this festival were present Archbishop Bouchier, *primas totius provincie, præfules ac principes regni*, with an astonishing number of the lower people. A new saint probably attracted much attention. Robert lord Hungerford by his testament bearing date the 22d of April, 1459, 37 H. VI. [b], bequeathed his body to be buried before the altar of St. Osmund, in the cathedral church of Salisbury, and dying May 18, 1460, was buried there.

I have mentioned the name of the above archbishop, as it adds strength to another conjecture, that the present parish church of St. Thomas was erected in these times; the arms of *Bouchier* and the see of Canterbury being still entire on a beam in the North aisle just over the door. The Catenarian arches

[a] “And thus blessed be God we be a werke, wherfor now it is nede that money be hadde in haft, by God hit hath cost many or this.

“Wherfor our matter hath be almost forget, and we have bite thayer gaping after your lettres without comfort of you, or of Tarentyne. By God I trowe that money had be in the bank our matter had be sped or this.”

[b] Dugd. Bar. II. 206.

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in the windows, and betwixt the pillars, seem to evince as much. That there was a former in the same spot, erected soon after the building of the cathedral, to which it served as a chapel of ease is certain. I have examined the probate of the will of Roger de Telyng, Pistor, xi Kalendas Augusti 1316, in which are these clauses :

“ Imprimis, lego summo altari ecclesie sancti Thome martiris Sar. vis. et fabrice ejusdem ecclesie iiii. Lego corpus meum sepeliendum in cemiterio ejusdem ecclesie.” Whether this was a slight or other temporary building, or whether the increase of the inhabitants made a larger necessary, certain it is from similar authority that at the close of this same century, Thomas de Boiton, bowyer, in his will left the sum of 20 marks due to him from a John Gilberd, “ nove fabrice australis ecclesie sancti Thome Sar.” This will is dated “ in festo Sci Jacobi Apostoli, Anno Dom. 1400,” If this church underwent a second dedication, as was customary, and was practised in the cathedral in 1258, the particulars are probably mentioned in bishop Beauchamp’s registers, where doubtless every thing respecting the business of the transaction must be met with. If this should be wanting, the account of the removal of Becket’s bones from this place of interment in the church of Canterbury, in order to their being placed in their shrine, which must have been the case here, will in some measure supply this defect and strengthen my idea. If, which is to be wished for, it is to be found, it will afford some information as to the sameness or change of customs in the church in the course of three centuries.

“ Than how his holy transacyon was fulfilled now shall ye here. The reverend fader in God Steven Archbyshop of Canterbury, Rychard Byshop of Salesbury, Walter the pryor of the

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same place with the covent with spiritual songs and devout ympnes, whan it was nyght went to the sepulchre of this holy martyr, and all that nyght and day of his transacion they persevered in prayers and fastyng, and after midnyght 4 preestes elected and chofen thereto, approchyng to his body, toke the holy heed with grete devocyon and reverence, and unto them all offered it for to kyffe. Than the Archbyshop and all the others made grete honour to it and toke all the relickes of the precious body, and layd them in a cheste, and shette it fast with yron lockes, and set it in a place for to be kepte unto the daye that the transacyon sholde be solemnyfed. The daye then of this holy transacyon beyng comen there were present a grete innumerable multitude of people, as well of riche as of poore. There was Pandulph a legat of the holy fader the Pope, and 2 archbyshops of Fraunce of Reyns and Arensis, with many other byshops and abbottes, and also kynge Henry the Thyrde, with erles and barons, whiche kynge took the cheste upon his sholdres, and with the other prelates and lordes brought it with grete joye and honour unto the place where it is now worshipped, and was layd in a fayre and moche riche shryne, at whose holy transacyon were shewed by the merytes of this holy faynte Thomas many miracles."

This happened in 1221. Though this matter is perhaps nowhere to be found but in the *Golden Legend*; yet, the miracles excepted, it seems intitled in all other respects to be regarded as historically true. The body of St. Osmund was brought hither with two other bishops, Roger and Joceline, at the feast of Trinity in 1226. It is to be presumed then this translation can mean nothing more than the taking up the bones from the grave, and placing them in a shrine near the altar. The office
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says, D. d. iiii. "Hodie apertis visceribus terra protulit confes-forem, hodie Osmundum tanquam mundo iterum exortum gaudemus; hodie capsam reliquiarum ejus devotis gressibus frequentamus."

Singular instances of general custom are apt to produce surprise in the discovery. This seems to have been the case with Mr. Gregory in his account of the *Episcopus Puerorum*. This institution was neither peculiar to this church or kingdom. It appears from the Northumberland household book, that they had a *Barne Bishop* at Beverley, and another at York. William de Yorke, the next but one in succession to bishop Poore, was provost of the former place, and most likely introduced it into the church at Salisbury. Bishop Poore according to Leland was the founder of the Hospital of St. Nicholas, to which bishop Bridport dedicated the foundation of the college de Valibus. From these instances the 13th century may be said to be the æra of the devotion paid to him.

In Germany in 1274, at the counsel at Saltzburg, the "*ludi noxii quos vulgaris eloquentia Episcopatus Puerorum appellat*," were prohibited as having produced great enormities [c].

In Spain antiently in cathedral churches in memory of the election of St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra, a chorister being placed with solemnity in the midst of the choir upon a scaffold, there descended from the vaulting of the ceiling a cloud, which stopping midway opened. Two angels within it carried the mitre, and descended just so low as to place it on his head, ascending immediately in the same order in which they came down. This came to be an occasion of some irregularities; for till the day of the Innocents, he had a certain jurisdiction, and his pre-

[c] Du Fresne, voc. *Episcopus Puerorum*.

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bendaries took secular offices, such as, alguasils, catchpoles, dog-whippers, and sweepers. “This, thank God,” says the author Covarruvias under the article *Obsipillis*, “has been totally done away.” He is however contradicted in the great Dictionary, where it is asserted that it is still kept up, particularly at Corunna and other cities, and in some Universities and Colleges. The word is Latinised *Puer episcopali habitu ornatus*.

The whole is with the greatest deference and respect submitted to his Lordship, by his dutiful and obedient servant,

Idmiston, April 22, 1786.

J. BOWLE.

V. Description