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## XXXI.—A few Notices respecting William Lynwode, Judge of the Arches, Keeper of the Privy Seal, and Bishop of St. David's. By Joseph Hunter, F.S.A.

Joseph Hunter

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XXXI.—*A few Notices respecting William Lynwode, Judge of the Arches, Keeper of the Privy Seal, and Bishop of St. David's.* By JOSEPH HUNTER, F.S.A.

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Read February 19, 1852.

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HAVING been so particularly called upon, at the last Meeting of the Society, to look into the state of our information respecting Lynwode, one of our most celebrated countrymen, and to report the result, I should have been wanting in proper respect to the President and the Society if I had not taken some little pains to put myself in the condition to do what was required of me.

Previous to the time of Leland, little if anything had been done to collect the facts in the lives of eminent Englishmen of whatever class, and to form what may be called a Body of English Biography. This was, however, a task which that diligent antiquary undertook, and his work has formed the basis of all subsequent accounts of English authors who lived before the Reformation. Of Lynwode he gives what are the main facts in any history that might be written of him.

The additions are but slight which are made to Leland's testimony by the two persons who followed in his track—Bale and Pits.

Godwin's notice of him, unlike many of the lives in his valuable work, is very brief, and adds little or nothing to what is to be found in the three writers so often named together—Leland, Bale, and Pits.

Fuller's notice of him is also brief, and is remarkable chiefly for fixing the birth-place of Lynwode at a village so named in Lincolnshire. In this he follows Harpsfield, an historical but not a biographical writer.

It does not appear that more was done till the time of Bishop Tanner. That most industrious and admirable person has taken Leland's account of Lynwode as his text, and has appended a body of notes and references to authors by whom Lynwode is occasionally mentioned, and also to the *Fœdera*, the publication of which, in the time of Tanner, opened new information in almost every department of English historical inquiry.

It would not be easy to give a satisfactory reason why Lynwode should have been left out in the general *Biographia Britannica* of the last century. He is, however,

not found there, and I am not aware of any material additions having been made to what is told of him by Tanner, till we had the satisfaction, at the last Meeting of this Society, to hear the Report of the Committee appointed to inspect the body which has recently been discovered in so singular a place of deposit at Westminster.

Whether the appearances are sufficient to leave no room for reasonable doubt that this body is that of a bishop, and, being so, of Lynwode, who was Bishop of St. David's at the time of his death, it may be considered a fortunate circumstance that the discovery has turned attention to the character and history of this distinguished statesman, prelate, and author: and, as a small contribution to any critical account of him to which this discovery may give occasion, I add a few remarks on what the old authorities have done for him, meaning more particularly Leland, Pits, and Tanner.

First, his Embassy to Portugal.—This fact in his history has all the evidence which can be required. For, first, we have the Letters of Credence which were given to him and Thomas Baron de Carrew, dated at Westminster, January 14, 9 Henry V., printed in the *Fœdera*, x. 167. There is a notice of the issue to him from the Exchequer, of 40*l.* on February 23, 9 Henry V., in advance for his expenses; and his account is still existing of his claim upon the Exchequer after his return. It appears from this account that he set out from London on March 3, and returned on the 14th of September, having been absent 196 days. His allowance for his services was 20 shillings per diem, which sum had been allowed to Simon Sidenham, Doctor of Laws, who had been employed in a previous embassy to France. The expenses of his passage and re-passage were allowed him. The sum which he claimed and was allowed was 162*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*

This was one of several embassies to different states of Europe sent by King Henry the Fifth to announce the conclusion of peace with France. But, as Lynwode himself states that he went *in secretis negotiis*, it is probable that more arduous business was committed to him. It was during his absence on this embassy that the demise of the Crown took place.

Leland informs us that Lynwode had been employed in an embassy to Spain, and, as it would seem, before he went to Portugal. Of this embassy I have myself seen no proof, neither Letters of Credence, Prestita, nor Account: but I would not be understood to affirm that such evidence may not exist to support Leland's statement. But certainly, when Tanner refers from Leland's notice of this embassy to Rymer, x. 473, as if we had there proof of Lynwode having gone to Spain, the document to which he refers relates to a transaction nine years later than the Portuguese embassy, and moreover does not shew that Lynwode went to Spain at

all, but rather the contrary, inasmuch as it is a treaty concluded at London, November 8, 9 Henry VI., between Ambassadors of Spain and three Commissioners representing the King of England, who were William Bishop of Norwich, Ralph Lord Cromwell, and William Lynwode. We have the Commission in the Acts of the Privy Council, printed by the late Board of Commissioners on the Public Records, iv. 69.

He appears to have been much employed in negotiations at home and abroad, of which no notice is taken by the writers of his life; as in the 13th of Henry VI., when he went, in company with Sir John Radcliffe, to the Dauphin of France, according to the printed calendar of the Patent Roll of that year. In the 21st of that reign he was a Commissioner to treat in London with ambassadors from Holland and Zealand (Acts of the Privy Council, v. 307); and doubtless a careful search among the evidences relating to affairs in the early years of the reign of Henry the Sixth, which is the period to which his political life belongs, might bring to light his engagement in other important public business.

One part of his history ought to be placed in a clearer light than it has yet been, because, till the dates are well ascertained, we are in danger of ascribing to him business in which he was not concerned. He is said to have been Keeper of the Privy Seal, and there seems to be no sufficient reason to doubt that he was so; but he certainly held for a time the office of Secondary Clerk to the Keeper of the Seal, an appointment of which the writers of his Life have taken no notice; and no one, as far as I know, has shewn the date of his first appointment to that high office, or of whatever break there may have been, if any, in the continuity of his tenure.

<sup>a</sup> Acts of the Privy Council, v. 150.