

XXII. *Letters from King Henry VI. to the Abbot of St. Edmundsbury, and to the Alderman and Bailiffs of the town, for the suppression of the Lollards: Communicated by JOHN GAGE, Esq. F.R.S., Director, to HENRY ELLIS, Esq. F.R.S., Secretary, &c.*

Read 3rd February, 1830.

DEAR SIR,

Lincoln's Inn.

IN the Register belonging to the monastery of St. Edmundsbury, compiled in the time of William Curteys XXV Abbot, are two letters from King Henry VI. addressed, one to the Abbot, and the other to the Alderman and Bailiffs of the town, for the suppression of Lollards, and other seditious persons. As these letters, or any on the occasion which gave rise to them, do not occur in our historians, I send you copies of them: they appear to have been written in 1431.^a

Your obedient humble Servant,

JOHN GAGE.

^a "1431. Soone after Easter the Lord Protector was warned of an assembly of certaine lewd persons, under pretence of religious minded men, to be assembled at Abingdon, wherefore he sent thither certaine persons, and also rode thither himself, and there arrested the Baily of the towne, named William Mandevil, a weaver, the which was appointed for a Captaine, who had named himself Jack Sharpe of Wigmer's land, in Wales, who being examined, confessed that he meant to have done many mischiefs, especially against priests, so that he would have made their heads as cheap as sheepes heads, (that is to say) three or foure a penny, (or, as some write, ten for a penny); many

I.

[*Regist. Curteys penes Edm. Wodehouse, Armig. fol. 301.*]

Lřa dñi Regis de p^uato sigillo direct^u dño A. p insurrecōe Lollardoꝝ latronū & at malefacōꝝ p^uide euitando, p eo qđ nonnulli hñi⁹ malefacōres in Coñi Cantabriĝ insurgere pponebant, put in eadem lřa pleni⁹ declarať; cui⁹ lře tenor sequiť in hec verba.

Be the Kyng.

Ryght trusty & welbelouyd, ffor asmoche as that, in this holy tyme of Whytsonwoke, the mysgoūned men of dyūs Shires of this oure land, & in especyal the Shire of Kent, aswel lollardes as other robbers & pillers of oure peple, were, in grete noumbre, & in ryotous wyse, gaderyng in the said Shire of Kent, to haue do the harme that they coude haue myght, and to have subūtyd al the polletique reule of this oure land; of the whiche mysgoūned men, S^r Nichol Coneway, knyght, the whiche is now take & set faste in presoñ, shuld a bene a Capitaigne; and of

of his complices were taken and sent to diuers prisons. Their Captaine was drawne, hanged, and headed at Abingdon, and his head was sent to London and set on the bridge, his other fautors were executed in diuers places and countries to the terror of other. Also, the thirteene of July, Richard Russel, woolman, was drawne, hanged, and quartered, for that he would have made Dukes and Earls at his pleasure." Stowe's Annales, edit. 1631, fo. 372. "While these things were doing in France, Henry Beauforde, Cardinall of Winchester, was sailed again into Englande, to appease and repress certain divisions and commocions, sprung up by mischevous and pernicious persons, within the realm, which, under the colour of a new sect of religion, conjured together, to disquiet and vert the whole quietnes of the realme. But after that William Maundeville and Jhō Sharpe were taken and executed by the governor and the kinge's justices, the remnaunt yielded and co'fessed there offences, whereof two articles wer these, as some men wrote, —that priestes should have no possessions; and that all thinges, by the order of charitie amongst Christian people, should be in common." Hall, edit. 1543, fo. 120 b. See also Annales Wilhelmi Wyrcester, 1431.

the whiche also mysgoũned men there be takyn & in þsone a grete noumbř; and, as we be now enformyd, there is like to be a semble gaderyng in Cantebř Shire, and as it is sayd, abowte Cantebř towne; We wol therfor that anone, afť the sight of thyse our lrės, ye doo al the diligence that ye can & may to the good reule of our saide Shire of Cantebř, and in especyal have a sight that there be no gaderyng of suche mysgoũnyd men, and at al tymes to be redy, wť all the myght & power that ye can & may gete for the resistance of ther malicious entent & purpos as it is to þsume they wold doo & execute. And more oũ We wil & charge yow to certefye vs in this behalf, from tyme to tyme, as the caas shal happen & require. Yoven vndir oure p'ue seal, at Westm̃, the v^{te} day of Juyn.

II.

[*Ib. fol. 84.*]

By the Kyng.

Trusty and welbeloued, the malicious entent and p'pos of goddis treito's and oures, heretiques in this oure Reaume, cōmenly called lollardis, the which now late by setting vp of cedicious billes, and oýwise, treiturly exhorted, stired, and meued ye poeple of oure land, to assemble, gadre, and arise a yenst goddis pees and oures, is not vnknowyn to yow, ne to no man endewed with reson, foresight, or discrecion: ye which how be it yat yei of high subtilite, fraude, and felnesse, feyñ, þtende, and write such thyng as yei trowe to blynde with yoo yat be simple, and to drawe by thire hertis and affeccions to yem and thire entent, intendyng neũlesse and p'posyng, with oute eny doute, ye subusion of ye xþen feith, and bileue of vs also, and of alle estatis, and gentilmen, and geñaly of all trewe xþen men and wýmen, yat wol not folow hem, and assiste hem in here dampnable errours, entent, and p'pos; and wolde destroie alle politique rule and goũnaile, spũel and temporel.

And consideryng yat yei, ayenst godds lawe and mannes, sture oure poeple, with oute oure cōmaundement or auctorite, to assemble and arrise, and yerwith p'pos and wolde take vpon hem and vsurpe aswel oure roial powere and auctorite as ye chirches, and vse correccion and goũnaille in no wise be langyng vnto hem yat owen to be goũned, and not so to goũne; ye which sturyng and vsurpacion of oure roial power, by ye lawe of this oure land is tresoñ, ech resonable man may wel fele, yat in eschuyng of, chastisyng, and reddoure of oure lawes, yei so doing, wolde neue' be yaire willes come to rekenyng yof, but dispose hem to be out of subjection, obeissance, or awe of vs, and of oure lawe; and, as God knoweth, neyere wolde yei be subgitt to His, ne to mannes, but wolde be louse and free, to robbe, reue, and dispoille, slee, and distroie alle men of estate, thrift, and worship, as yei p'posed to haue do in oure fadres daies, and of ladds and lurdains wolde make lordes, and geñaly wolde vse, do, and fulfille alle yeire lustys and willes yat God forbede: and howe be it yat by ye grace of oure lord, and ye grete and notable diligence of oure bele vncle of Gloucestř oure lieutenant, and of othir Coñmissioners and juges in sondry places, lawful execucioñ hay be doon vpon diuse of ye said godds treito's and oures, the which of reson owed to haue be vnto hem and yeire complices extreme confusion and rebuke; neũyelesse it is credibly frome day to day reported vnto oure said lieutenant and consail here, in diũse wises, yat ye wiked and malicious p'pos of ye said traitours cesseth not, but continueth and abidey: wherfor, how be it, yat We wrote late agoo vnto yow yat be knowe true vnto god and vs, to yentent yat folweth: neũlesse, for as much as We know not wheỹ oure said lřes come vnto yow or no, We write efte vnto you, p'yng yow hertly and also chargyng yow on ye feith, trouth, and ligeance yat ye howe to god and to vs, yat with alle diligence, and with oute delay or tareyng, ye ordeyne and array yow and youres, and sture othir siche as wol accompanye yow, to be redy to assemble, with oyere of oure trewe liege men to do ye same, and with-stande, myghtily chastise, and subdue ye dampnable malice and entreprise of goddis said traito's and oures, ye which yee and alle oure

trewe liege men haue gret cause and maȝe to haue in grete awayte. And, in especiale, We wol and charge yow, yat yee enquere, considere, and take gode hede, fro tyme to tyme, whch of ye inhītantes in ye cuntree aboute yow haue nowē of late tyme absented hem, or absent hem hereaftire, oȝwise yen yaire occupacion or craft axeth; and also of straunge and vnknownen comers, such as eny maȝe of ille suspicion may resonably be felt ynne, and yat ye areste, serch, and examine hem in ye straitest wise, whens yei come, and wher yei have be, and of alle ye dayes, tymes, and places of yeire absence, and also of soweris of cediuous, disclaundrours, or trubulos langage, or talys. Oū yis nat suffer- yng pryue gaderynges, or conuenticles to be had or made, be nyght, or be day, yere aboute yow, hauyng alwey your recours and resort, when someue' yow thynk yat nede is, for yo' soco', your help, and confort, to our saide lieutenant and consail, whome ye shul fynde eū wele willed and disposed to purvey yat yat may be to your suretee and confort, and ese; and faillith not in due and diligent execucion of yese yynges be forsaid, as ye desire oure p̄sperite and youres and welfare. Yeven vndre oure priue Seel at Wesmynstre ye vj day of Juyll.

To oure trusty and wel beloued
ye Alderman & Balifs of oure town of Bury.