

your goode mynde towards me, and in the mean tyme ye shalbe faste assurede of my faithfull servyce in all suche your affaires as ye commite unto me, and for no corruption or lucre frome my loyaltie to swerve in doying my princes commaundement for your discharge, whyche hath put your truste and affiance unto me. Frome Yorke, xiiij^o Januarii, by your assurede poire preste,

RICHARDE LAYTON.

While Legh and Layton were in the North, Bedyll was occupied in Cambridgeshire, and the fen district. The celebrated abbey of Ramsey was founded soon after the middle of the tenth century. The charter of King Edgar is printed in the Monasticon. The last abbot was John Wardeboys, *alias* Lawrence: he was appointed to that place as early as 1507, and must have been an old man at the time he surrendered his house to the King, which he did very willingly.

XLVI.

BEDYLL TO CROMWELL.

[From. MS. Cotton. Cleop. E. iv. fol. 204.]

In my moost hertie wise I commende me to you, doing you to understand that I am now at Ramesey, wher in myne opinion the abbatt and convent be as true and as feythful obedienciaries to the kinges grace as any religious folkes in this realme, and live as uprightly as any other, after the best sort of lyving that hath been among religious folkes this many yeres, that is to sey mor gyven to ceremonies than is necessary. I pray God I may fynd other houses in no worse condicion, and than I wolbe right glad that I tok this jorney. Your cosyn Mr. Richard* was her on Thursday, by whom I sent letters unto you, whiche I thinke ye have

* The term *cousin* was applied in a very general manner to all kinds of distant affinity. Richard Cromwell was the secretary's nephew.

not yet receyved.* Muche of the mater of my letters concerneth a charter of king Edgar, whiche I found in this house, wreten in a very antique Romane hand, whereof the subscription is this, *Signum Edgari illustris Anglorum imperatoris*; And it is subscribed with vj. dukes whiche were in Edgars tymes. The said Edgar exempteth the abbat and his convent and al his men from the power of al bisshops, and maketh thaim immediatly subject to him self; and albeit they were then excepted, the bisshop of Rome had never to do with thaim. Ther may be good notes gathered out herof, as I have wreten mor playne in my said letters delivered to Mr. Richard. Here in this monastery of Ramsey be two brethren whiche have gyven thes billys enclosed unto me, very affectuosly desiryng to have liberte to go from thaire cloyster by the kinges grace auctorite, or els to have licence to repair to my lord of Cauntrebury to sue thaire capacities. I have steyed thaim as wel as I can, with suche counsels and exhortations as I could gyve thaim; but I fere, if they can have no liberte graunted thaim, they wol take it of thaire owne auctorite. I beseche you to write a word or two how I shal use me self towards thaim and al other whiche wol make like suyt, in no smal number as I think, whereof som occasion hath growen by that that docter Lee now at Christmas gave liberte to half the house of Sawtre † to depart (as I am informed), whiche Sautre is within v. myles of Ramsey. The religious men thinketh that I have like auctorite as doctor Lee, and that moveth thaim to make this suyt. Nevertheless I wol no thing do therein, or presume suche hyghe maters, without your advise and counsel, beseching you to write your mynd in this behalf, and in suche other things whiche ye wold me to do in this

* This letter is preserved in the same volume, but is not of importance, as it chiefly contains a copy of part of the charter.

† The abbey of Saltrey, or Sawtrey, in Huntingdonshire, was founded in 1146, when Simon earl of Northampton established there a convent of Cistercian monks from the abbey of Wardon in Bedfordshire. The last abbot was William Angell.

journey. If it pleased you to grant me a commission to visit the religious houses unvisited in Lincoln diocese, whiche shal be nyghe my journey, it shuld be muche to my commodite. From Ramsey the xv. day of January.

By your owne,

THOMAS BEDYLL.

To the right honorable and my singuler
frende, M. Thomas Cromwel,
the kinges grace secretarie moost worthy.

The next letter relates to the mal-practices of the abbot of Fountains, who has been already mentioned in a previous letter. He was a few months afterwards condemned and executed for his activity in the rebellion of 1536.

XLVII.

LAYTON AND LEGH TO CROMWELL.

[From MS. Cotton. Cleop. E. iv. fol. 114.]

Pleasit your mastershippe to understonde, that thabbot of Fountance hath so gretly dilapidate his howse, wastede ther wooddes, notoriously keypyng vj. hoorres, diffamede here *a toto populo*, one day denyng thes articles with many mo, the next day folowyng the same confessyng, thus manifestely incurryng perjurie. vj. days before our accesse to his monasterie he committede thefft and sacrilege, confessyng the same. At mydnyght causede his chapelaine to stele the sextens keis, and towke owte a jewel, a crosse of golde with stones. One Warren, a goldsmith of the Chepe, was with hym in his chambre at that owre, and ther they stole oute a gret emerode with a rubie; the saide Warren made thabbot beleve the rubie to be but a garnet, and so for that he payede nothyng, for the emerode but xx^{li}. He solde hym also then plate withoute weyght or ounces: howe moche thabbot therfore therin was deceide he cannot tell, for the trewith ys he ys a vara fole, and a miserable ideote. We pronuncede hym perjured, and willed hym