

LETTERS RESPECTING FAUCONBERGE'S
KENTISH RISING IN 1471.

COMMUNICATED BY J. R. SCOTT, F.S.A.

The following letters, one written by the Bastard of Falconberge,* from Sittingbourne, to the "Commonalty of the City of London," on the 8th of May 1471, the other sent in reply by the citizens, have been transcribed from the Archives of the City of London, at Guildhall (*Journal No. 8, folio 5, et seq.*), by the kind permission of the Town Clerk, J. B. Monckton, Esq., who is a native of Kent.

FAUCONBERGE'S LETTER TO THE COMMONALTY.

To the Worshipfull my feithfull trusty and welbeloved ffrendes the Coi'altee of the Citee of London your feithfull trewe lover Thomas ffauconberge Capteyn and leder of o^r lige lorde Kyng Henry's people in Kent at this tyme sendith hertly Recom'endacon letyng you wite that I am enformed how the party of the vsurper of o^r said liege lords Crown hath made you to vnderstonde that I w^t the Kyng's people should purpose to robbe Ryfell and dispoile the Citee of London if I came therein Wherefore they exorted you to make vs warre and kepe vs oute of the Citee certaynly ffrendes God knowith whome I call to recorde It was neu' myn' entent ne purpose and therefore I beseche you to give no credence to their fals' suggestion and surmyse But trusty ffrends sethen

* "In the year 1471, after the battle of Tewkesbury, Thomas Falconbridge, known as the Bastard of Falconbridge, who had been practising piracy, collected a number of mercenary supporters in Calais, and landed in Kent, sailed up the Thames, with 17,000 adherents of the House of Lancaster (including some Kentish men) intending to surprise London and to release King Henry, who was then confined in the Tower; but was repulsed, and finding that Edward IV was marching towards London, he retired in good order to Sandwich, where he fortified himself having 47 ships under his control; but hearing of the death of Henry VI he submitted to King Edward [who had marched to Canterbury]. Falconbridge was soon afterwards beheaded" (Furley's *History of the Weald of Kent*, vol. ii., pages 405-406).

it is so that I have taken upon me w^t the help of almyghty God and the kyng's trewe com'ons to revenge his quarrell ayenst the said vsurper and his adherents and to seek hym in what partees he be w^tin the Realme of Englond to abryge the peynfull labour and to short' the wey of the Kyng's people hertely sette and disposed ayenst the said vsurper desire and praye you courtelisly to passe through the Citee in oure wey and we shall neith' take vitaille ne ware w^t outen payment be ye therof certayn and that I p'myt you one myn hono^r for he is not w^tin the King's hoste in my company that breketh the Kyng's crye but he shall have execuc'on according to his offences no more vnto you at this tyme saf we have desired of the Mare and Aldreme' to have an answeherof by ffriday ix of the clokk at the blaketh and almighty IHS have you and the goode Citee in his blessed garde written at Sydyngbourne hapely the vij day of May.

Yo^r owne ffrende and wellwiller &c.

THOMAS FFAUCONBERGE.

A similar letter was addressed by Fauconberge to the Mayor and Aldermen (*vide* folio 4^b of *Journal* 8). These letters are important, as enabling us to ascertain the true date of Fauconberge's attempt. He was at Sittingbourne on Wednesday, the 8th of May, and requested that the Londoners' reply to his letters might be delivered to him on Friday, the 10th of May, at Blackheath. The narrative given by a contemporary, Dr. Warkworth, in his *Chronicle*,* is therefore inaccurate when it makes Fauconberge reach London on Sunday, the 5th of May, and open fire that day upon the city, with his guns, burning some of the town at Aldgate and at London Bridge.

REPLY SENT TO FAUCONBERGE BY THE CITIZENS OF LONDON.

Worshipful S^r we Receyved your l'res written at Sydyngbo'n the vij day of the p'sent moneth of May by the which we vnderstand that is com'en vnt' yo^r knowleg that if ye and yo^r ffealashipp w^t he which ye be accompanied shuld come vnto the Citee of London like as ye write ye entende to doo that than ye wold Ryfell and dispoile the said Citee ye desire vs by the said l're that we shuld geve no

* *Warkworth's Chronicle*, printed by the Camden Society, pp. 19, 20.

credence to noon such surmyse seyng and takyng record of God that ye nev' entended so to doo praying vs to suffre you and yo^r said ffeolaship to passe through the said Citee of London vpon yo^r jo^rney to p^rfo^rme and execute such things as in yo^r said l^res ben more largely expressed. Ser we late you wite that whan ye Kyng. Kyng Edward the iiijth oure Sou'aigne lord aft' his grete victorye hadd vpon Est' day last passed besid Barnet dep'ted oute of the said Citee of London he charged and com'aunded vs vpon o^r aligeaunce that we shuld kepe ye same saffy and surely to his behof and use, not suffryng any p'sone what degre condicion or estate wereof gadreyng or making assemblees of any people contr^ay to his lawes w^tout auctorite of his high com'aundeme't to entree therin ffor the which cause and many other we ne dare may ne will suffre you to passe through the same Citee letyng you wite for certayn that we vnderstond that if ye an yo^r said felaship shuld come and entree into the same that yo^r said felaship wold be of lik condic'on as o^r like disposic'on have bene in tyme passed as by sondry p^rcedents it appereth vnto vs right largely And it shuld not lye in yo^r power to lett yo^r said feolaship from dispoilage and Robrye Wherefore we adv'tise you for that love and s^rvice that we afore tyme have ought vnto that noble knyght yo^r flader* and oure goode lord Whose steppes we wold that ye shuld folowe. And for verrey favo^r that we have borne and bere vnt' you for the good disposicion and vertue that in tyme passed we have knowen to be in you that ye spare and absteyne your self from such unlawfull gaderyng and assemblyng of people the which if ye soe doo We doubte not but it shall not onely be vnt' you grete hono^re and Worship but alsoe to yo^r prevaile And cause the Kyng the Rather to be yo^r goode and gr'oux lorde. More ou' S^r we have receyved a p^rclame'on sent from you in the which amonge o^r articles we vnderstonde that ye by the com'aundeme't of Henry late Kyng of this Realme Margaret late Quene and Edward late called p^rnce by the avise of th'erle of Warrewyk whom ye suppose to be alyve as we ben enfo^rmed and other ye be ordeyned Captayn of ye navye of England and men of warre both by the See and by lande. Right Worshipfull S^r we m^rvaile gretely that ye beyng a man of so

* Thomas Fauconberge (called the Bastard of Fauconberge) was a natural son of Sir William Nevill, youngest son of Ralph Earl of Westmoreland. Sir William having married the heiress, Joan de Fauconberge, was in her right summoned to Parliament as Lord Fauconberge, from 3rd August 1429 to 23rd May 1451. He was a strong supporter of the Yorkist party, and was created Earl of Kent in 1462 by Edward IV, but he died during the same year, without any male heir.

grete wisdom and discrecon shuld be deceyved by symple seyings and fayned tales We certife you vpon our Worshippes and trouthes that both ye said Edward lat' called prince and th'erle of Warrewyk ben slayn and dede for we know for certayn not onely by ye Raport of men of credence both of this Citee and by o^r which were w^t the said Erle of Warr' on the ffeld whan he and his bro'r Marquys Montagu were slayn but also by open lying of their bodyes in the Church of Paules by the space of ij daies which many of vs did see and vnderstand for certayn to be the bodies of the said Erle of Warrewyk and Marquys. Also S^r the said Edward late called p'nce therle of Devenshire lord John of Som'set, lord Wenelok, S^r Edmond Hapden S^r Robert Whityngh^m S^r John Lewkenore*, John Delves w^t o^r moo were slayn upon Saterdag last passed at Tewkesbury, and the duke of Som'set lord of Seynt Johns, S^r Gerveys of Clifton† S^r Thomas Gresh^m w^t other moo to the nombre of xij p'sones ben' taken and ben' heded on Monday last passed as we ben certayly enfo^med at Tewkesbury aforesaid Where God yave the Kyng o^r said Sou'aigne lord the victory As we certaynly vnderstand not onely by l'res signed w^t oure said Sou'aigne lords own hand Wherof we sende you a cople herin enclosed and by writyngs senden from Lords and gentlix there beyng p'sent vnto div's and many p'sones and men of Worship and by o^r S^ru^{ants} of the same Citee Wherof some were sent vnt' to the hoost of our said sou'aigne lord the King And some vnto ye hoost of ye said Edward late called p'nce to see and vnderstonde the disposicon of both ye said hoosts And to make reaport vnto vs accordyng to the trouthe whch feithfully have made reaporte vnto vs of the disposicon and gudyng of both ye said hoosts. And howe and in what man'e and fo^me the said Edward late called p'nce and o^r were taken and slayn Wherfore we frendly exorte and stire you not onely to absteyn your self from such unlawfull gaderyngs and assemblees of people and gevffying feith and credence to any symple feyned and forged tales contr^{ary} to trouthe as it is reherseed but also to take Accepte and obey the Kyng. Kyng Edward the iiijth for

* Sir John Lewknor of Goring and West Dean in Sussex (brother of Sir Thomas Lewknor of Bodiam Castle, Sussex) was father-in-law of Sir Wm. Scott Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Governor of Dover Castle, and ancestor of the Scots Hall family.

† Sir Gervase Clifton—of Clifton in Nottinghamshire—had married Isabella Finche, widow of Sir Wm. Scott of Scots Hall, and daughter of Vincent Finche of Netherfield, Sussex, direct ancestor of the Earls of Winchilsea and Nottingham, and the Earls Ashburnham, Sussex. Sir Gervase Clifton had been Treasurer of the Household of Henry VI, Treasurer of Calais, and had had charge of the temporalities of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He was Sheriff of Kent in 1451. His widow's brass is now in Brabourne Church.

yo^r sou'aigne lorde the grete victoriees afore rehersed which god hath gevyn hym by his myghty power considered like all the lords sp'uells and temp'oll of this land and we haue also agreed for to doo And ye soo doying shall cause the Kyng rather to be yo^r good and thereby ye shall eschew gret jeobadiers parells and inconvenientes that myght ensewe of the contr^y. And also ye shall not only haue oure good wills and benevolenc^s in all things that herafter ye shall haue to doo wee us but also we shall be meane to the Kyng's highnesse trustyng that by oure prayer he shall be vnt' you the rather good and gr'oux lord letyng you wite for certayn that ye nor yo^r hoost shall not come w^t in the said Citee written at london in the yaldhall the ix day of May.

To the Worshipfull
S^r Th: ffauconberge

{ By the Mair' Aldreme'
Shireffs com'on Counsaile
Mast^{rs} Wardeyns of Crafts
and Constables of the
Citee of London.

Warkworth's Chronicle seems to have antedated the whole proceedings, by one week; in all other respects its narrative appears to be correct. Another contemporary record* states that Fauconberge came before London on the 12th of May; and that date accords well with these letters. The latter "*History*" says that he left his fleet of ships before St. Katherine's, and made a semblance of passing over the Thames by Kingston Bridge ten miles above London (p. 35). His attack on the City was made at three points. At London Bridge, he set fire to the bridge and burned sixty houses built upon it. To Aldgate he sent 1500 men, and a similar number he dispatched to attack Bishopsgate. At both points they shot guns and arrows against the citizens and "set fire upon the gates" (p. 36). Earl Rivers sallied from Aldgate, and drove the assailants to their ships. As King Henry VI was then imprisoned in the Tower, the arrival and stay of a fleet opposite St. Katherine's would no doubt be reported to the captive monarch, whose spirits would be cheered by the din of his friends' attacks.

King Edward IV, hearing of Fauconberge's rising, sent forward 1500 men on the 14th of May, and two days later he himself left Coventry for London (p. 34). The *History* proceeds to state that Fauconberge's host withdrew to a hill three miles

* *History of the arrival of Edward IV in England and final recovery of his kingdoms 1471*, edited for the Camden Society by John Bruce, in 1838—page 33.

from London, (Blackheath no doubt is meant) and remained there during the 16th, 17th, and 18th of May, until hearing of the King's approach they fled. It states likewise (p. 38) that Henry VI *died of pure displeasure and melancholy* in the Tower on the 23rd of May, and that Fauconberge surrendered himself and all the Earl of Warwick's ships, to the Duke of Gloucester at Sandwich, on the 26th of May (p. 39).

Warkworth's Chronicle adds further particulars. It says that Lord Scales, commandant in London, used every means to cajole Fauconberge and persuade him to return home, because the progress of so large a force would have put Edward IV into greater jeopardy than he was in at Barnet or Tewkesbury. Nicholas Faunt, mayor of Canterbury, was prevailed upon to persuade Fauconberge to abandon his enterprise. Such was Faunt's success that the host was ordered back to Blackheath, and Fauconberge, with 600 soldiers and sailors of Calais stole away, and rode to Rochester, whence he proceeded to Sandwich. His great host, says Warkworth, remained together at Blackheath for one day and one night after his departure, and then dispersed. He adds that Henry VI was *put to death*, in the Tower, on the 21st of May. Edward IV marched to Canterbury, and when Fauconberge surrendered at Sandwich he was pardoned; nevertheless, says Warkworth, he was shortly afterwards beheaded, by the Duke of Gloucester, in Yorkshire. Nicholas Faunt was beheaded at Canterbury.

Commissioners tried all the men of Kent, Sussex, and Essex, who had been at Blackheath with Fauconberge, and, says Warkworth, "many others that were not there." Some were fined 200 marks, others £100, and even the poorest had to pay at least seven shillings, although they were not worth so much, but were obliged to sell their clothes, and to borrow money to pay their fines; "and so the Kynge hade out of Kent myche goode and lytelle luff."*

* *Warkworth's Chronicle*, page 22.