

# Archæologia Cantiana.

THOMAS COCKES, THE DIARIST.

BY DOROTHY GARDINER.

## I.

RECENT researches into records of the Consistory and Archdeacon's Courts of Canterbury which the present writer has been able to consult have brought to light, among much other valuable detail bearing upon citizen life in Canterbury under Elizabeth and James I, fresh facts about Thomas Cockes the diarist and his clerical friend, Sir William Walsall. Cockes was a witness in an enquiry held before the Commissary, Sir George Newman, between March and September 1587.<sup>1</sup> It related to certain tithes and cesses claimed by the Vicar of St. Paul's, Canterbury, in respect of the Chantry House and its orchard, situated in Chantry Lane. The site has now a tragic interest, for the modern residence, standing as of old adjacent to an orchard, was destroyed by enemy action in October 1942.

Cockes' diary—or more accurately account book—acquaints us with the most intimate details of his habits of life between 1607 and 1610. The deposition supplies certain facts of his earlier history hitherto unknown. He was, it seems, at the date of the enquiry thirty-six years old, a native of Tilmanstone. He was now resident in the Precincts, probably already in the Old Palace, and had been there something under three years, since his appointment as Auditor to the Dean and Chapter in December 1584.

Previously he had lived for six years in Tilmanstone; before that for two years in Canterbury at some address unspecified, and before that again for two years in the parish of St. Paul's-without-the-walls. It was this term of residence, apparently about 1574, which brought him into the Court, for he was then the tenant of the Chantry House. He and his wife and family attended Divine Service and the Sacrament in St. Paul's Church, and he had been used to pay 10s. a year in tithe for house and orchard to the reigning Vicar of St. Paul's, "Sir Henry Hevisede," whose term of office extended from July 1560 to the early part of 1586. He understood that the tenants his predecessors, ever

<sup>1</sup> x.11.1, fo. 104b, vii Martii 1586-7. Super libello ex parte Walsall contra Stoeke dato.

since the Chantry of Hamon Doge was dissolved, had paid the same tithe, as well as an annual 2s. or 2s. 6d. towards the wages of the parish clerk and 8d. a week in poor relief.

Readers of the Diary will remember the frequent references to Sir William Walsall, by that time a Minor Canon of the Cathedral, living in St. Margaret's parish, and still others to his wife, Margaret Walsall, affectionately described by Cockes as "my valentine" or "my va:":

She it was who took charge of poor Mrs. Cockes who was "distracted of her witts."

At the time of the enquiry, some twenty years earlier, Mr. Walsall "had bine Vicar of St. Paules nere and without the walles of the Cittye of Canterbury" for upwards of a year, in succession to Mr. Hevisedede. Part of his tithe was collected by the parish clerk, a parishioner and a bricklayer by trade, one John Williams. Williams had a good deal to tell the Court about the Chantry orchard, which was an acre in extent and evidently productive.

"In sommer tyme last past . . . in the fruite gathering tyme he, this deponent, hard one Truelove say, who gathered fruite for Bartholomew Stocke and John Keble, that they . . . had boughte the fruite comming and growing in the orchard of the Chauntry within the parishe of St. Paules, of widowe Pawlen, and that they payd ten poundes betwene them to the widowe Pawlen for all maner fruite growing within the orchard called the Chauntry orchard. . . . True-love did gather the fruite comming therin for Stocke and also for John Keble, and did watche the orchard everie night, untill such tyme as Stocke and Keble had the fruite from thence growing therein . . ." Williams had himself seen Truelove pick the fruit: "appelles, peares wardens or cheryes," how many bushels in all he could not say, but the apples were worth 16d. a bushel. He also testified that for the past thirty years when the parishioners beat the bounds—and he was usually of the party—they had "compassed in Chauntrie Lane as parte and parcell of the parishe of St. Paull."

Mrs. Pawlen's husband, who is said to have "owned" the Chantry property, had been "Collector for the pore and surveior of the highe wayes of the parish."

A long succession of tithepayers had tenanted the house for short periods; several are mentioned as personally known to the deponents, "Mr. Cope, Mr. Whithorne, one Coles widowe," ". . . one Mr. Wigmore, one Mott and after him one Brise . . .," all worshippers at St. Paul's. The facts suggest that a year or two after Mr. Thomas Pawlen or Pollin's death in September 1584 his widow sold the Chantry house and orchard to Thomas Cockes. It figures very often in his Diary. In 1607 he was involved in a lawsuit about it with some people called Purcell, when John Man and his father acted for him as "Cownsell in lawe."

The tenant of the Chantry property during the Diary years was Richard Bixe, at an annual rent of £8, and on one occasion we hear of twelve pence "given to Bixe's son, that brought me apples"—no doubt from the famous orchard. The latest entry refers to a payment of the disputed tithes—"For my rent of Chantry garden 5s," (December 13th, 1610).

## II

When Thomas Cockes lived in St. Paul's parish he had a home with his wife and children. Before the Diary was penned tragedy had befallen him: his wife, Mary (before her marriage Mary Mylls) had become deranged and been placed in Mrs. Walsall's care. This charitable lady also supervised the outfit of Cockes' two sons, Roger and Thomas, and certainly seems to have deserved the diarist's loyal devotion by her efficiency and kindness in his affairs. Thomas Cockes died on the 15th of October, 1611, and was buried in the Cathedral on the 17th. The tablet to his memory erected above the entrance to St. Andrew's Chapel by his executor, William Walsall, does not mention his age, which we now know to have been 60.

J. Meadows Cowper in editing the Diary<sup>1</sup> prefaced it with an introduction and a full copy of Cockes' will. The document which follows<sup>2</sup> enables us to picture vividly the circumstances under which, with characteristic precision, the will was made.

The omissions, necessary to save space, are merely legal repetitions and circumlocutions:

John Kidd, Curate of Chartham for the past four years, born in the Cathedral Precincts, thirty-three years old, deposed, and exhibited a copy of the will. He said "that on a day happeninge much about the time of the date of the will exhibited whereon he is now examined, and as he now remembreth upon a Sundaie in the eveninge, he . . . was requested by Mr. William Walsall of the Citye of Canterburie . . . in the testator's name, to meete him . . . the next morninge at . . . Mr. Walsall's house situate in the City . . . to be a witnes of his last will and testament, which . . . Mr. Tho: Cocks did then and there intend to finishe and ratifie. . . . The next morning in the forenoone, cominge into the hall of Mr. Walsall's house (where he at that tyme lodged) . . . [he] found there the testator, being well and in perfect and good helth, accompanied with Mr. Edmund Denne, . . . and thaforsaid Mr. Walsall; and anon after William Shorte, the testator's servant, was called in alsoe. And soe they being thus altogether, the testator told them the occasion of their meeting, which was, as he said, to make up and confirme his will which he had there brought readie and fairlie written in one skinne of parchment and that

<sup>1</sup> MS. E.31, Dean and Chapter Library.

<sup>2</sup> x.11.12, fo. 85a, 29 Jan. 1611-12.

they might be witnesses thereof. And then openinge his . . . will, . . . the testator read the same all over himselfe, plainlie and deliberatlie . . . and when he had soe read yt he told them that that was his absolute and finall last will and testament and then subscribinge his name at the lower end thereof and affixinge his seale of armes therunto on the labell hanging under yt, he in manie plaine and expresse termes . . . ratified the same for his last will and testament. . ."

The preparation of the document was described by William Shorte of the Precincts, for seven or eight years before his death Thomas Cockes' servant, a native of Wendleberry in Oxfordshire and thirty-one years old or thereabouts. He said that a fortnight before the ceremony of signature, "Mr. Thomas Cockes having himself made a draught of his last will . . . delivered the same unto this deponent, beinge then his Clarke, to write fayre." This he did, and Cockes "did himself review and examyne the same and in diverse places altered and corrected yt accordinge as he pleased, and havinge soe finallie perfected and finished the same in all respects as he would have it stand . . . did againe deliver the corrected copie unto this deponent to ingrosse faire in parchment. . ."

They then, will and all, proceeded together to Mr. Walsall's abode. Shorte adds the detail that the "seal of armes" was set in Cockes' ring, no doubt "my best seale ring of gold" bequeathed to his eldest son, Thomas, and that "the testator takinge the will into his hands delivered the same unto Mistris Walsall, wife of Mr. Walsall (who was likewise all the while present) to lay up and keep safely for him."

William Shorte's legacy was "my cloath gown or xxxs, at his choice."

Edmund Denne, a man of 62 who had resided for the past two years in St. Mary Northgate parish but came from Lympne, told how he happened to become a witness. Mr. Thomas Cockes had met him one day "in the bodie of Christchurch . . . and acquainted him in secreat (as he said) with a purpose that he had to make his last will . . . and wherin he requested this deponent that he might make bold to use him as a witsnesse, wherunto this deponent willinglie condescendinge," an appointment was made for a day some weeks after. The two were to meet in Cockes' chamber in the Precincts, and thence to go together to Mr. Walsall's in St. Margaret's, where the doors being shut, the will, as we have seen, was signed and witnessed with due solemnity, Mr. William Walsall being appointed executor.

Denne was a surgeon licensed to practise (presumably in Canterbury, as, at his advanced age, he could hardly have been beginning his medical career) in March 1612/13 on the presentation of testimonials from Dr. Ethelbert Spencer, M.D., a well-known Canterbury practitioner, whose patient Thomas Cockes had been.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> cf. Diary, p. 44.

Under date December 20, 1608, the Diary records the purchase of parchment by William Shorte from Mr. Joseph Colfe's, price iis. ; and again in December 1610 "pd Short[']s rec]koninge for p'chm't and candells xs. ixd." This last might well have been intended for the will. As we have seen, Cockes lived on about eight months after its completion in February 1610/11.

## NOTE.

A further document recently found among papers in Ecclesiastical Suits, in the Dean and Chapter Library, relates to a libel action brought before Sir George Newman in January 1599/1600, by Thomas Cockes against Thomas Warriner, a Minor Canon of the Cathedral and from 1585 onwards Rector of St. Mary Magdalen. Cockes affirmed, through his proctor, Alexander Norwood, that Warriner had openly, in the Precincts (where he was living at the time), and elsewhere, in public hearing, spoken of him as "A pawltrie Jacke, an ignomynious knave" and (rather belatedly) as a monk's son.

Worse still Warriner had publicly accused the Auditor to the Dean and Chapter of immoral relations with "Mr. Walsalle's wyfe", adding "and he hath abused my house."

The conclusion of the case is not on record. Early in the proceedings Mr. Sweeting, Warriner's Counsel, protested against the jurisdiction of the Commissary General; in April 1600 Proctor Norwood handed in a schedule of expenses incurred through the consequent delays; these Sir George taxed at 2s. Either the malicious charges were withdrawn or the case was carried further to the Court of Arches.

In any event Cockes's Diary (1607-10) shows that the friendly relations between him and "my valentine," and her consistent kindness to his afflicted wife and his school-boy sons, were not interrupted.

Thomas Warriner was probably the son of Brandinus or Briand Warriner of St. George's, born in 1544. In 1565 he married Anne Roche at St. Alphege Church. The date of his death is not on record. It would be interesting to know whether "Mr<sup>is</sup> Warryner, the old woman," to whom at dates between October 1608 and November 1610 Cockes paid sums varying from 6d. to 2s., was the widow of his old antagonist. Matthew Warriner, son of Thomas, was also a "Petti-Canon" and Sacrist of the Cathedral.