

**THE ŒCONOMY OF THE FLEETE: OR AN
APOLOGETICALL ANSWEARE OF
ALEXANDER HARRIS (LATE WARDEN
THERE) UNTO XIX ARTICLES SETT FORTH
AGAINST HIM BY THE PRISONERS**

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AUGUSTUS JESSOPP

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AN APOLOGETICALL ANSWEARE OF ALEXANDER HARRIS
(LATE WARDEN THERE)

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BY THE PRISONERS.

EDITED,

FROM THE ORIGINAL MS. IN THE POSSESSION OF
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

I.

IN the month of January, 1876, I obtained permission from His Grace the Duke of Westminster to examine certain MSS. at Eaton, which the third Report of the Commission on Historical Manuscripts had made known to the public. The noble mansion was under the dominion of an army of builders, and some difficulty was experienced in finding the volumes I especially desired to see. While looking for them I came upon the MS. from which the following pages are printed. I was first attracted by noticing many names of the Recusant Gentry with whose misfortunes and hard treatment I had become familiar in the course of my researches into the working of the Penal Laws against Catholics during the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and it was not long before I discovered that it was a document of some interest and value furnishing us with a picture of the condition of a London prison in the seventeenth century such as can, probably, be found nowhere else.

The volume had evidently been almost exactly in its present condition when the scribe finished his copying into it; it is a folio volume which some diligent compiler of the latter half of the seventeenth century had used for transcribing into, and can hardly have been opened for two hundred years. The sand which the writer had

sprinkled is still liberally distributed over the paper, and in some cases the pages had slightly stuck together from the ink being scarcely dry when the writer had turned over the leaves. The book contains 660 pages, which are numbered to the end, though several have never been used; the writing is beautifully clear and neat, and rarely presents any difficulties.

It is evident that the original from which the Eaton scribe copied was imperfect, and that one or two leaves—perhaps more—on which Harris had written his particular answer to Coppin and Kennel, had been torn off. What more Harris's "Defence" may have contained it would be idle now to guess. All that follows from p. 152 to p. 159 appears to have been of the nature of an "Exhibit," which the defendant "put in" when he presented his defence to whatever court of appeal it may have been originally intended for.

On my bringing the MS. to the notice of Mr. Gardiner, the Director of the Camden Society, he suggested that the Duke should be applied to for permission to print the volume, and he invited me to undertake the editing of it for the Society. With prompt and delicate courtesy his Grace, in reply to my application, sent the MS. by return of post: no questions were asked, no conditions imposed; and since February, 1876, the volume has remained in my custody.

I was not able to set to work at my task as early as I hoped, and when I began I was surprised to find that I had quite under-estimated the amount of trouble it would involve. I had assumed that I should find abundance of materials ready to hand if it should prove advisable to draw up a brief account of the Fleet Prison; and had a vague idea that such stray notes as I had set down from time to time, in the course of my own desultory reading, might be

easily supplemented by references to the more accessible sources of historical knowledge. I soon discovered to my dismay that nobody could tell me much about the history of prisons in England, and that I should have to break ground and explore with little or no help from previous inquirers.

I fear that some members of the Camden Society will be inclined to complain that I have not done more to illustrate this MS. I cannot hope that many will give me credit for anything approaching the amount of research it has really involved. I regret I could do no more; I have done what I could.

I have to express my gratitude to many friends for many kind services. The fields of historical research are so very wide that a man cannot hope to achieve anything of permanent value in that domain except he be *en rapport* with his fellow students; and how freely they help one another they know best who work hardest.

It is enough to say that I have frequented the Record Office to make it quite certain that the officials there have been of incalculable service to me. We have heard much of late of an "English School of History," and of the good work it is doing and has done. It would be difficult to estimate the influence exercised upon Historical Literature in England by such chivalrous guides and helpers as Mr. Bond and Mr. Selby, though it seems almost invidious to mention any names.
