

Oxford in 1699

By J. A. W. BENNETT

THE three letters printed below were written to Thomas Tanner, author of the *Notitia Monastica* and later bishop of Norwich, in the year 1699. None of them is signed, but one bears the initials 'W.A.' The references to 'our house' suggest that the author was, like many of the men he mentions in his letters, a member of Christ Church; and it is easy to associate him with the Christ Church wits who gathered about the 'free, open, and facetious' Dean Aldrich. The catalogue of the Bodleian Library identifies him as William Adams, student of the House. There were three men of this name on the books of that college in 1699; but the mention of approaching ordination in the last letter makes it probable that Tanner's correspondent was the William Adams who was born at Shrewsbury in 1673, took his B.A. in 1695, his M.A. in 1698, and later became rector of Staunton-upon-Wye. He died in 1714, and his sermons were published by Dr. Sacheverell two years afterwards. Like many of the men mentioned in his letters—Wells, Langley, Gastrell, Spalding, he had been elected to Christ Church from Westminster.

Tanner himself had been appointed chaplain of All Souls in 1695 (by Leopold Finch's interest); Samuel Pepys helped to procure his election to a fellowship there in the following year (*v. Pepys's Private Correspondence*, ed. J. R. Tanner, I, 128); and in 1698 he had spent the summer in London, collecting material for his *Bibliotheca Britannica* at the library of Bishop Moore of Norwich, and at the Royal Library. At the time these letters were written he had returned to town for further study. They are all addressed to 'Mr Thomas Tanner, at the lord bishop of Norwich's hous in Charles Strete near St. James's Square.' The reference in the last to a possible marriage match for Tanner at Oxford should be read in the light of Hearne's comment that it was while Tanner was visiting Moore's famous library that he was 'drawn in to marry a short, fat, plump Daughter of the Bishop' (*Coll.*, I (O.H.S. II), 201). The offer of the Registrarship was made by 'the best and most considerable part of the University' (Arthur Charlett to Pepys, *op. cit.*, II, 196). Instead, Tanner became Chancellor of his father-in-law's diocese.

Addison, who is mentioned twice in the letters, had taken his M.A. in 1693 (at Encaenia of that year with two other Magdalen men he had given an oration on 'Vetus et Nova Philosophia'). In 1698 Montagu, Chancellor of the Exchequer, had obtained a 'pension' of £300 a year for him, so that from travel

J. A. W. BENNETT

he might gain experience for diplomatic employment. William Adams's belief that the poet would not make a good spy gains some support from a remark in one of his letters from Paris to his patron, Montagu: 'My imperfect acquaintance with the French Language makes me incapable of learning any more particular News of this kind . . . ' (Ellis, *Letters of Eminent Literary Men*, p. 295; 14 Oct., 1699).

I

Bodleian, MS. Tanner 21, f.39.

4 May [1699]

Tomas,

Just as I had dated my letter, in comes in Francis Bugg¹ desiring me to buy one of his books called the Pilgrims progress to Xstianity (meaning that he was no Xstian when he was a Quaker). but I'd be no more bound to read it, than I would all the Pamphlets with Ric. Chiswel at the bottom.² The town here rings of canvassing for the Registers place,³ and I assure you your friends are busie & firm in your absence; but that old comedian will live as long as Methusalem. Remember me to Chichly⁴ if he be in London. Mr Creech⁵ has turn'd Barnet⁶ out of your house. Our friend H. Stevens preach't on Mayday a very pretty sensible sermon before the university.⁷ Prithee bring down some choice delicat Rums. I have lately met with clim of the clough & Adam Bell.⁸ The Oxford Ladies are in bodily fear lest the French should come and ravish 'em. And some of them say Lord what a strange thing it is to be ravish't. They were ne're ravish't in their lives. If I could send thee a Ream of paper full of news I would: but there is none here, but that Randal of Oriel has powderd his hair, in order to be Bp. Talbot's Chaplayn⁹; Lyon gives his Service to you; and the

¹ *The Pilgrim's Progress, From Quakerism, to Christianity*, by Francis Bugg, sen., of Mildenhall, was published at London by W. Kettleby in 1698. There is a portrait of Bugg facing the title-page. Sewel (*History of the People called Quakers*) calls him an 'envious apostate.'

² Richard Chiswell, 1666-1711, a well-known London publisher. From 1681 he published *Weekly Memorials for the Ingenious*.

³ The registrar of the University from 1659 to 1701 was Benjamin Cooper (B.A. 1647, ob. 1701).

⁴ Probably John Chichely, of London, who entered Christ Church in 1695, became a fellow of All Souls in 1699, and a barrister-at-law, Middle Temple, in 1701.

⁵ Thomas Creech, the translator of Lucretius, M.A. 1683, fellow of All Souls 1683. In June, 1700, Creech hanged himself in his lodgings at the house of Mr. Ives, the apothecary (mentioned later in this letter) 'upon account of a mistress'; the 'Character' of this mistress is given in a very rare 'Letter to a Person of Quality' called *A Step to Oxford, or a Mad Essay on the Reverend Mr. Tho. Creech's Hanging himself (as 'tis said) for Love* (1700). Hearne (*Coll.*, ix (O.H.S. lxv), 81) describes him as 'a very proud, morose, sower Man, and no good Company.'

⁶ Thomas Barnet matriculated from All Souls in 1694, graduating B.A. in March 1695, but he took his M.A. from St. Mary Hall (1701).

⁷ Henry Stephens, B.A. 1690, fellow of Merton 1693, M.A. 1697. Hearne (*Coll.*, i (O.H.S. ii), 225) gives a summary of one of his sermons at St. Mary's before the University.

⁸ *Clum of the Clough and Adam Bell*. There were several reprints of this ballad in the 17th century.

⁹ Peter Randal, M.A. 1686, fellow of Oriel. Vicar of St. Mary's 1700. Talbot was bishop of Oxford from 1699 to 1715.

young Graecians are run away from Gloster Hall.¹ Dr. Rogers has a new pair of breeches in order to stand for President,² and Adam Langly³ and Gastrel⁴ of our house stand for Lincolns Inn, but they'll no more get'n than Barts of Univ will Mrs. Bull,⁵ and I tell you that since she is gon to London, Ives the poticary is ready to break, having no vent for his chocolat, which is as sure as that Addison is gone to London to get to be secretary. Prithee Tomas write me some news, and against the next time I send you a letter, I'll get A fine spruce new pen ; I hear your friend Usher has printed his case⁶ ; but 'twill be like Spalding's case⁷ of our house, which was answered in 2 lines. Hubbubabu is gon into Shropshire, but afore he went he talk't 6 people dead, about Cock-fighting.⁸ Your rivals in the Registry are Capt. Rag, Ford of New Coll. and Smith of St. Johns, and young Cooper.⁹ I believe th'old fellow will dy because Dr Lydal¹⁰ is his physician.

¹ 'Lyon' is perhaps Ezekiel Lyon of Bordeaux, vicar of Stanway, Glos., in 1689, and of Sherbourne St. John's, Hants., in 1699. He was incorporated M.A. in 1704. For an account of the attempt to found a college for Greek youths at Gloucester Hall under the care of Dr. Benjamin Woodroffe see C. H. Daniel and W. R. Barker, *History of Worcester College*; though they do not mention this early defection of the young Greeks.

² John Rogers, M.A. 1675, B.D. 1687, fellow of Magdalen 1675-1701, president 1701-1703. Adams must be using 'Doctor' as a courtesy title, as Rogers did not receive the degree of D.D. till 1701. Rogers evidently anticipated that Hough (president 1687-1701) would be translated to Lichfield to succeed Bishop Lloyd, who was translated to Worcester when that see became vacant in March, 1699. But Hough remained president for more than a year after he became bishop of Lichfield.

³ Adam Langley, Christ Church, B.A. 1695, M.A. 1698, vicar of Black Bourton, Oxon. 1700.

⁴ Francis Gastrell, M.A. 1687, B.D. 1694. Later canon of Christ Church and bishop of Chester. He won even Hearne's praise as 'rational' and 'honest, notwithstanding he was a Complyer' (*Coll.* ix (O.H.S. LXV), 57); v. also *D.N.B.*

⁵ Mrs. Ann Bull, one of Dr. Luffe's handsome daughters (v. p. 150 n. 3). At the age of sixteen she had married Henry Bull, of Magdalen Hall, who had died in 1695. She later married Dr. Edward Hanns (v. p. 151 n. 5) 'who used her most barbarously, which shortened her life' (Hearne, *Coll.*, x (O.H.S. LXVII), 256).

⁶ Charles Usher, University College, B.A. 1697, barrister-at-law 1709; '... a very ingenious Gentleman, who was expell'd you know some years since for certain Expressions that were objected against him that had been spoken two years before...' (Hearne to T. Smith, 22 May 1709, *Coll.*, II (O.H.S. VII), 201).

⁷ Aug. Spalding, Christ Church, B.A. 1683, M.A. 1686.

⁸ I cannot identify the owner of this nick-name—unless it was Thomas Bubb of Badgeworth, Glos., who matriculated in 1691 and entered the Middle Temple in 1693.

⁹ Edmund Smith, student of Christ Church (M.A. 1696), author of *Phaedra and Hippolytus, a Tragedy*: one of the Christ Church wits. 'Some good social qualities render'd him much caress'd by all the boon Companions...' (Burton, *Genuineness of Lord Clarendon's History Vindicated* (1744), p. 40; v. also Dr. Johnson's account in his *Lives of the Poets*). He was known as 'Captain Rag' because of his rakish appearance, was repeatedly admonished for his conduct, defeated in the election for the censorship of Christ Church in 1703, and finally expelled. James Ford matriculated in 1687; B.A. 1690, M.A. and fellow of New College, 1693. George Cooper, son of Benjamin, B.A. (Merton) 1687, M.A. 1689. He was registrar from 1701, the year of his father's death, till 1737. The St. John's man was probably John Smith, B.C.L., fellow of his college 1686.

¹⁰ v. p. 152 n. 12.

J. A. W. BENNETT

II

Bodleian, MS. Tanner 21, f.63.

May 21 [1699]

Dear Sir

'Tis thought that you being in prospect of something more considerable than the Registers place, will lay aside standing for it : if you do desist, I desire I may know it as soon as you've resolv'd ; for Mr Smith's sake of our coll. to whom you are the most considerable Antagonist. I've no news to send, but that your warden¹ is ill of the dropsie and black Jaundise ; I wish Mr Creech (who goes to London on Munday) mayn't encrease his distemper by complaints to th' Archbish. Last Friday the Bp. of Salisbury held a discourse to his clergy concerning the powers of the church. I heard it commended as one of his best. As to the Satyr you mention of Dr Garth's,² I've seen it : but understand it not perfectly. You must in your next letter give me a kind of a Key &c. There are good whims in it, and the man seems to have a genius for poetry, but not overmuch judgmt. in the managemt. of it. It is an imitation of Boileau's *Lutrin*, but vastly short on't. That the Luff's³ are gone up to the play hous I am inform'd ; as also that Henchman of Merton⁴ preach't a printed sermon at St Maries last Sunday.

Dear Sir, I am yours'

next week I'll write again.

W.A.

III

Bodleian, MS. Tanner 21, f.90.

Thursday, June 5th 1699

Dear Tomas,

I had writ to thee before ; but I've bin preparing my self for Orders : now all is over, & I've bin with the Bp. & his chaplain ; and have nothing to do but to pay my Riches, and receive Imposition of hands. I've no particular call to that holy profession, besides a good resolution, which I took very lately to enter

¹ Leopold Finch, warden of All Souls from 1686 till his death in 1702. James II was responsible for his appointment (Dryden being the other candidate, cp. *Modern Language Notes*, Feb. 1937, p. 115), and the best we know of him is that he procured Tanner a chaplaincy and a fellowship at All Souls. Hearne, too, speaks of his 'great indisposition of body' (*Coll.*, I (O.H.S. II), 200).

² *The Dispensary*. It had circulated in manuscript some time before it was published in 1699.

³ John Luffe, regius professor of medicine, 1681-1698, had died on 7 September of the previous year. He was survived by his wife, son, and three handsome daughters, who were the cynosure of Oxford eyes. The youngest, Hester, won admiration from Hearne, who does not usually descant on female charm (he must have seen her often at St. Peter's-in-the-East, which he says was always crowded with young gentlemen when she attended : ' . . . a most charming sweet creature, and admired by all that saw her, and 'tis pity she had not a Fortune equal to her Beauty . . . ' (*Coll.*, X (O.H.S. LXVII), 260, q.v.). Her sister Ann was also a 'wonderful fine woman' (e. p. 149 n. 5). Mary, the third sister, was born in 1679 and became what Hearne calls the 'paramour' of Dr. Martin, a fellow of Merton (*Coll.*, X (O.H.S. LXVII), 257).

⁴ Humphrey Henchman, B.A. 1691, M.A. 1694. Vicar of Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex, 1702.

into it, and have had the Grace to keep it. Dear Thomas as to your honest design of standing for Coopers place, no man can blame thee; I was only prevaild upon to desire you, that in case you did desist ever, to let our Smith know it soonest. Old Cooper is very well again, but in the course of Nature can't last long, no more than your warden can; or Dr Bathurst,¹ who (poor gentleman) dotes, and falls away apace; which makes old Dr Wallis² laugh to think of his own Iron-sides; but next Winter will take off a string of the old blades. I've seen the 2d edition of the dispensary, and the commendatory verses; Mr Codrington has some kind of glittering or false fire in his, or something that betrays a furious hot temper³: but Mr Boyl will never gain any reputation by his.⁴ I had a great notion that by Querpo was meant Hanns⁵; I'm sorry you've undeceivd me. They may rail at Gibbons⁶ but Garth will ne've get a hundred guinea fee as Gibbons had lately of my Lady Scudamore. I'm sorry Dr Bernard⁷ couldn't be spar'd. But I think Horoscope and Mirmillo touch not much Dr Bernard and Gibbons, because very little particular. What news Tomas of the Cambr. Horace?⁸ Prithee take care of thy proper person, and don't pore too much upon old worm eaten Manuscripts. I hear Jo Addison has a pension to

¹ Dr. Richard Bathurst was famous for his long presidency of Trinity (1670-1704), of which he had become a fellow in 1640. In his last years he was blind, and he died after a fall in the college gardens. His life was written by Thomas Warton.

² John Wallis (1616-1703), mathematician, and author of *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1652); keeper of the archives, 1658-1703. Charlett had described him, two months earlier, as 'as fresh and vigorous for any new undertaking (of any sort) as if he had never put pen to paper' (*Pepys's Private Correspondence*, I, 171). John Lewis also remarked on his 'hale and vigorous constitution of body.' 'Iron-sides' is possibly an allusion to another veteran—Gilbert Ironside (1632-1701), warden of Wadham, 1665-1689, and vice-chancellor, 1687-1689.

³ Christopher Codrington (1668-1710), had become a fellow of All Souls in 1690. His lines on the *Dispensary* include the couplet:

Thou hast no faults, or I no faults can spy,
Thou art all beauty, or all blindness I.

⁴ The Hon. Charles Boyle (1676-1731), another Christ Church man, whose edition of the *Epistles of Phalaris* (1695) led to the famous controversy with Bentley, which Garth mentions in lines 77-78 of canto v of the *Dispensary*:

So Diamonds take a Lustre from their foil
And to a B--ly 'tis, we owe a B--le.

⁵ Edward Hanns, also of Christ Church, D.M. 1695. A well-known Latin poet in his day and commemorated by Codrington in his lines on the *Dispensary*:

With Learned Hannes thy healing cares be join'd,
Search thoughtful Ratcliffe to his in most Mind . . .

⁶ Wm. Gibbons (1649-1728) D.M. (Oxford) 1683, fellow of the College of Physicians, 1691. Garth satirized him as Mirmillo since he opposed the project of dispensaries for the poor. He is said to have taken his fees with alacrity.

⁷ Charles Bernard, chief chirurgion to the Queen: the most famous surgeon of his time, and 'withal a man of integrity, of good natural parts and of some considerable learning' (v. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, IV, 104; *Dispensary*, canto II, 101 f.).

⁸ *Q. Horatii Flacci Opera; ad optimorum exemplarium fidem RECENSITA access. variae lectiones* (Cantab. 1699). It was edited by James Talbot. Some collations for it were made by Creech (v. *Pepys's Private Correspondence*, I, 173).

J. A. W. BENNETT

travel. Such things were common in H. 8th's & Q. Eliz.'s time and several princes doubtless have honourable spyes in Engl[and]. I'm afraid Jo Ad-----n won't make a good Spy. Here has bin Whitson Ales at Hedington Wheatly and old Quarry's, and I saw Jo Pullin dancing at quarry's.¹ I forgot to tell you that I understood by Celsus in Garth's poem Dr Bateman.² Dr Woodroff has giv'n us another Revelation Sermon,³ and Bp Bartlemee of Lincoln on Whitsonday in the afternoon, gave his charge to the Oxf--- clergy. D. Jones was drub'd by the Morris dancers at Hedington for preaching against May poles.⁴ They say Gastrel⁵ is going off to the Indies with Codrington. Our friend Basil Kennet⁶ goes into Orders on Sunday; as also does the gay gentle Tom Yalden⁷ and Neddy Wells the Map-maker.⁸ Here is a bouncing jolly widow of Dr Blagrove's lays traps for Heads of houses,⁹ as Dr Gardner does for a Headship¹⁰; and Dr Dunster for a Joke,¹¹ but they'll hardly light upon't. Honest Tomas I tell thee what. The founder of Merton's house-keeper (meaning one that passes for Dr Lydals eldest daughter)¹² is going to be married to Dr West.¹³ Surely (as Dr Brown says) the eldest hopes will never be superannuated since the grave has bin made a Mistress, and carcasses courted. Old Breach¹⁴ says your warden won't live unless he follows advice, which he'll never do for his own good. If you've a mind you may have one of Dr Lydal's daughters. There will be no Act.

Dear Tomas godb'w'e.

¹ Josiah Pullen (1631-1714), vice-principal of Magdalen Hall, was a well-known character in the Oxford of his day, and celebrated for his eccentricities and feats as a walker. An elm tree at Headington was long called after him, and its position is still marked by a stone in Pullen's Lane (v. Hearne, *Coll.*, v (O.H.S. XLII), 8).

² *Celsus* appears in Book VI, 1, 19, of the *Dispensary*. The identification is correct.

³ For Dr. Benjamin Woodroffe see p. 149 n. 1. Dr. Charlett also mentions this sermon in a letter to Tanner: 'Dr. Woodroff preacht this morning about the Revelation, but nothing so entertaining as before' (MS Tanner 21, f.68, 21 May, 1699).

⁴ David Jones was Oxford's most violent preacher. Hearne could find words for Sacheverell's anathemas only by describing Jones as 'a soft, mild preacher in comparison of him.'

⁵ v. p. 149 n. 4.

⁶ Basil Kennet (1674-1715), M.A. 1696, fellow of Corpus 1697, son of White Kennet.

⁷ T. Yalden (1671-1736), M.A. 1694, fellow of Magdalen 1698, vicar of Willoughby, Warcs., 1701. There is a biography of him in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

⁸ E. Wells (1667-1727), M.A., Christ Church, 1693, rector of Cotesbach 1702. Later D.D. and curate of Bletchley.

⁹ Dr. Jonathan Blagrove, M.A. 1674, D.D. (Lambeth) 1696, canon of Worcester 1690-98, had died on 29 Aug., 1698.

¹⁰ Dr. Bernard Gardiner, D.C.L. 1698, succeeded Finch as warden of All Souls in 1702.

¹¹ T. Dunster, D.D. 1690, warden of Wadham 1689-1719.

¹² Dr. Lydal, D.M., warden of Merton 1693-1704, was old and unlearned, and had six or seven daughters.

¹³ Thomas West, B.A. 1687, M.A. 1691, fellow of Merton 1688, D.M. 1696, fellow of the College of Physicians 1718. Buried in Merton College chapel, 1738.

¹⁴ Dr. W. Brecch, D.M. 1687, a well-known Oxford physician. He died in 1708 and was buried in the Cathedral.