

## A LETTER OF AN ENGLISH DOMINICAN PROVINCIAL TO JAMES II

*WE think that it may interest our readers to have before them in print part of the contents of a document which was recently picked up in a bookseller's shop and handed to the Librarian at Blackfriars, Oxford. It consists of a double sheet of paper eight and quarter inches long by six inches broad. On one side is the draft of a letter, written by Father Vincent Torre, the Provincial of the English Dominicans, to King James the Second. This letter is reproduced here. On the other side are two drafts of a letter by the same writer, addressed also to King James the Second, wishing him a happy new year and enclosing the name of the Saint drawn as His Majesty's Patroness for that year, 1687. This letter was sketched out in duplicate, and in the second version it is worded in such a way as to allow for the possibility of His Majesty's receiving not a Patroness but a Patron. Perhaps the Father Provincial wrote his drafts before the actual drawing of Patron Saints took place. This second letter, taken from the Original State Papers [Italian States, bundle 139 (1686-7) No. 113. Public Record Office], has been printed in 'Dominicana: English Dominican Records.' (Catholic Record Society, Vol. 25).*

*The letter here given has, so far as we know, not hitherto appeared in print. Fr. Vincent Torre, its author, was the first actual Provincial of the English Province since the Reformation. He was born in 1630. He was implicated in the Titus Oates plot and obliged to retire to the Continent. He died at Bornhem on August 24th, 1687.*

*An English Dominican Provincial's Letter to James II*

Rome, July 20/10, '86.

(1686)

Most Gracious Soverain

This inclosed is from our new Generall<sup>1</sup> elected last Pentecost by our Generall Chapt<sup>r</sup>., a most worthy, learn'd, zealous Person, y<sup>r</sup>. Maties. subiect born in Aquitain, a great Esteemer & admirer of y<sup>r</sup>. singular zeale, heroic Piety, & Royall Conduct. He has confirm'd the Priviledge granted by his Predecessor to both y<sup>r</sup>. Maties. (w<sup>ch</sup>. I sent last year in Parchem<sup>t</sup> by Mr. Talbot) of an intire & perfect participation of all the Prayers, Ma<sup>s</sup>., & other good works don by his whole Order consisting of 45 Provinces spread over y<sup>e</sup> world; England for number being one of y<sup>e</sup> least, made a greater figure in this last Generall Chap<sup>r</sup>. than y<sup>e</sup> biggest, as well for number of vocalls as for Learning, Lectors of Divinity, publick Defensions, w<sup>ch</sup>. were two, very solemne, (other Provinces had but one apiece) both Dedicated to y<sup>r</sup>. Matie., his Em<sup>ce</sup>.<sup>2</sup> assisting at them attended with a most numerous Train of Bishops, Prelates, Monsig<sup>ns</sup>., Provincials, &c. Y<sup>r</sup>. Maties. most dutifull subject Presided over y<sup>e</sup> Defendent Lectors, who acted their parts with great Applause. In fine his Em<sup>ce</sup>.<sup>2</sup> & we his Alumni used our

<sup>1</sup>Fr. Antoninus Cloche, certainly among the most illustrious of the successors of St. Dominic. He ruled the Order for thirty-four years, the longest period of rule of any Dominican Master-General. He was born in 1628 and died in 1720.

It is of interest to note that for a short time he held the honorary title of Provincial of England. Cardinal Howard, who had hopes of reconstructing the English Province, asked Father Cloche to forgo the title in favour of an Englishman, and Fr. Vincent Torre, the writer of this letter, was given the title and the active duties attached to it. Pope Innocent XI was edified by Fr. Cloche's modesty and prompt renouncement of his title, and he made him Provincial of Greece.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Thomas Cardinal Howard, O.P.

## *Blackfriars*

best indeavours to raise yr. Maties. honor as high as we were able, in outdoing (as tis known we did) other Dedications, to his Hol<sup>nes.</sup>, to the Emper<sup>r.</sup> to y<sup>e</sup> Kings of Spain, Polland, french King, &c. . . . My hope was to b<sup>e</sup>gin my iorny imediatly after the Chapt<sup>r.</sup>, the sooner to lay myself, with y<sup>e</sup> said Dedication at yr. Maties. feet, but y<sup>e</sup> Heates were then increased to such intenseness that it was tho<sup>t.</sup> too unseasonable for so long a iorny, how contrary soever this delay seemed to y<sup>e</sup> ardent desire I have to serve yr. Matie. & my country there according to the true duty of, Most gracious soverain, . . . yr. Maties. most humble & most dutifull subiect & servant fr. C. U. Vincent Prov<sup>ll.</sup> of y<sup>e</sup> English Domic.

For our most gracious Sovereign of g<sup>t.</sup> B. fra<sup>ce.</sup> & Ireland etc.