

More's Address on November 3 to the Parliament of 1529; Eustace Chapuys' Account to Emperor Charles V

From *Calendar of Spanish State Papers*, #211, 8 November 1529. 1

—London, 8th November [1529]

...[T]he Chancellor rose, and began in a rather diffuse speech to explain the causes and reasons which had moved the King to convoke the assembly, the substance of which was to shew the good-will and affection the King had always borne the people, not only as a prince, but also as a good king and pastor: and that in order to obtain for his people the blessing of permanent peace and safety from oppression, he had spared no trouble or fatigue, and had also tried by every means to increase and prosper the trade of the country, since the wealth of England and the comfort of his subjects rested principally on this. All present knew how much trouble and fatigue he (the King) had undergone for the consolidation of peace, seeking everywhere for the means of ensuring the peace of Christendom, and establishing its union and repose, in which undertaking he had spent considerable treasure. He had now called them together to communicate several matters, and to ask them to advise with him respecting the welfare, advantage, and tranquility of the kingdom, and principally the reform of justice. To obtain which latter object he had begun with the Cardinal, as chief defaulter, who having attempted and done many things against his royal authority, and to the detriment of the crown and kingdom, and having besides committed many acts of gross and flagrant injustice, of which they would be hereafter informed, had just been tried and condemned by a Court of Law, as they had no doubt heard.

After which the Chancellor (More) began to exculpate the King for having allowed the Cardinal to remain so long at the head of affairs. The fault, he said, was not the King's, but of those who knowing his wickedness had not informed him of it. He, himself, had not discovered until very late the Cardinal's bad propensities; and if he had taken him too much on trust it was merely owing to his many occupations in war and elsewhere, which prevented his looking as closely into the administration of public affairs as he intended doing henceforward. Besides which, obliged as he was to entrust the government of the kingdom to another, he might be excused if he had blindly placed confidence in an ecclesiastic of high dignity, as the Cardinal was, whom he naturally supposed to be honest and virtuous. The King, added the Chancellor, had been marvellously deceived in his expectations, and as a proof of his assertion he went on enumerating the misdeeds of the Cardinal, and commenting, as it were, on the blazon of his armorial.

The Chancellor then went on to say that of all matters of State those concerning ecclesiastics needed most reform, especially in England, and that reform the King intended to undertake at once. He ended by saying that in order to begin the work and go into the question at once it was expedient that they should appoint one of their number, a person of note, to be speaker (*prolocuteur*), in the name of the said Estates there assembled, and gave them two days of term to do so, summoning them for the manor of Valmonestier (Westminster), which is their court of law and justice.

Thursday and Friday the Estates met, and elected at first the Archbishop of Canterbury to be

their speaker (*prolocutuer*), but being a churchman he was not agreeable to the King, who rejected him on the plea that he was too old. After which another one was elected to the King's taste (*a' l'appetit du Roy*), they say that he is a man of learning (*sçavant homme*).

On the ensuing Saturday the King attended personally, and the speaker (*prolocuteur*) was sworn. Today business is to commence, and the affairs under discussion are to be brought forward. I will inquire the particulars in order to keep Your Imperial Majesty au courant....

Signed: "Eustace Chapuys."

¹ Great Britain. Public Records Office. *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*. London: Longmans and Co., 1882.