

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 2 December 1585 from Sir John North (c.1550-1597) to Sir William More of Loseley requesting More to extend a lease in the Blackfriars which the Italian fence-master, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), had purchased from Oxford's servant, John Lyly, who had obtained it from Oxford. For other letters from North to More on the same subject dated 10 October 1585 and 6 November 1585, see SHC LM/COR/3/382 and SHC LM/COR/3/383.

For Sir John North, see the *ODNB* article.

For John Lyly's lease of the Blackfriars property, see the *ODNB* article:

Lyly's use of the Blackfriars as an apparently essential part of his playwriting enterprise had been achieved by legalistic chicanery that had deprived the landlord of his rights and transferred the property to the earl of Oxford, who passed it to Lyly.

Among others, Sir Walter Raleigh and Oxford's brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie (1555-1601), Lord Willoughby d'Eresby, also wrote to More on Bonetti's behalf. For Raleigh's letter see Folger MS L.b.37. For Lord Willoughby's letter see SHC LM/COR/3/372. See also the Loseley manuscripts at:

http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_ep=Rocco&_dss=range&_ro=any&_p=1500&Refine+dates=Refine.

Shakespeare alludes to Bonetti's skill as a fencer in *Romeo and Juliet* ('the very butcher of a silk button'). Since a topical allusion of this sort would not have been made after Bonetti's death, the allusion indicates that *Romeo and Juliet* was written prior to 1587.

Sir William More, according to your last letters Signor Rocco by my means nominated for himself 2 arbitrators, Mr Dr Ford and Mr Aldersie of Milk Street, which with Mr Sothebie and Mr Salter met at my lodging on Wednesday after dinner this last week.

Little was done in the matter, and the less because so good an opinion is conceived of your just and charitable dealing, being known to be a most Christian gentleman, that *vnanimo consensu* they thought it rather more convenient by the way of entreaty to crave your favour and move you to pity, considering his great extremity and charges grown by the building of your tenements, than otherwise to beat their brains in tedious and troublesome examinations, when in fine the best and surest course for the poor man's relief consisteth wholly upon your own conclusion, unto whose good consideration and conscience both himself and we do refer the whole matter.

Truly in mine opinion his great expense and cost bestowed upon your houses deserve a good lease with a reasonable rent in that his money hath bettered your tenements and augmented the revenue to your posterity hereafter.

I speak no more herein, I protest before the living God, than in conscience I would and will consider when it shall please him to give me means and living. Every man feeleth the law of conscience in his own soul, which bindeth more than politic laws, and as touching the secret forfeiture of his house, you know that *summum ius* is *summa iniuria* [=The greater the right, the greater the wrong].

But I join with the rest in most earnest suit unto you in God's cause to be good unto him, who otherwise is utterly undone, which were most lamentable for a poor stranger in a foreign country and void of all friends.

Thus leaving him to your good devotion, and craving your answer, with my best commendations I take my leave and commit you to God. London. 2 December 1585.

Your assured friend to his power,

John North

Mr Sothebie is at this present out of the town, who promised also to set to his hand unto this other letter to do the poor man good, who dealeth in my conceit very wisely and discreetly in your affairs according to the trust reposed in him.

Endorsed: To the right worshipful my good friend, Sir William More, at Loseley.