

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 27 January 1586 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, 6 November 1585 and 2 December 1585, see SHC LM/COR/3/382, 383 and 387.

For Sir John North, see also the *ODNB* article:

*North, Sir John (c.1550–1597), soldier and traveller, was the eldest son of Roger North, second Baron North (1531–1600), of Kirtling, Cambridgeshire, and Winifred (d. 1578), daughter of Richard Rich, first Baron Rich, and widow of Sir Henry Dudley. . . . He was granted a licence to pass beyond the seas for two years in May 1575. North did not leave until September, but still arrived in Italy in October 1575. He stayed exactly two years, finally arriving back home in November 1577. The entries in his interesting journal of the trip are initially in English, but by the end are entirely in Italian (Bodl. Oxf., MS Add. C.193). . . . It was probably in [1580] that he married Dorothy (d. 1618), daughter of Sir Valentine Dale, master of requests.*

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](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, understanding of your being in the town and of the small abode you purpose to make in the city, I would not omit th' opportunity of time now to put you in mind of poor Rocco, that according to your courteous promises, I thank you, in your late letters, you would at this present vouchsafe to make some final end in that matter.

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Truly if in conscience and at mine earnest request on his behalf you shall but grant him a lease of half those years which at the first he hoped for, being one and twenty, and as men usually make, I shall not only for him, being a stranger whom I do affect, think myself greatly beholding unto you, but in what and when I may for you and any of yours endeavour myself to the best requital, as proof when the like occasion serveth shall verify.

The poor man is daily vexed in mind and in continual doubt, whereof your charitable favour and expedition may forthwith disburden him, whereunto with assurance I leave him.

If my health had been answerable to my desire, I would have seen you now in person, but my sickness hath long continued, which perforce detaineth me from my friends. Praying therefore to be excused, and commending me in my best manner unto you. London, 27 January 1585.

Your assured friend,

John North

I have requested a good friend of mine, one Mr Beaumont, to take the pains for the delivery hereof, and the rather (if it may please you) that he may know some part of your pleasure herein.

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