

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 6 November 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 another letter from North to More on the same subject dated 10 October 1585, see SHC LM/COR/3/382.

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, being no little moved with compassion of the poor estate wherein Signor Rocco now standeth, then(?) I am also emboldened to write unto you upon th' assurance of your charitable mind towards him, being a man not unknown unto you both in respect of your mutual and private dealings together as also for the slender means of his living, being a stranger, I cannot but most earnestly, together with the request and suit of many gentlemen, recommend him to your good and lawful favour for a lease of your house wherein he dwelleth conformable to your former and courteous promises made unto him, by the performance whereof not only poor Rocco (being a mere stranger oftentimes hardly dealt withal and deceived, and now especially brought almost into extreme poverty by the folly of his building and the charge of his wife and family) shall be forever himself and his most bounden to pray for you and yours, but also a number of honourable gentlemen which wish him well, and myself with infinite thanks, shall acknowledge the charity and friendship you show him.

Wherewithal referring him to your good devotion, and craving by this bearer some comfortable answer from you to the reviving of his troubled mind, I take my leave and commit you to God. From my lodging by Paul's. 6th November 1585.

Your assured friend,

John North

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