Duel at Louth

1632

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

The humble petition of Robert Legard, Esquire.[1] Humbly shows that upon 14 April 1631, John Legard,[2] your petitioner's second son, being at Louth in the County of Lincoln upon necessary business, one Mr. Richard Bolls came into his company, a man altogether unknown to your petitioner's son, but hearing him called Bolls, the said John Legard asked what Bolls it was, saying if it was Bolls of Gaton he owed him a debt of £40. Some of the company told him it was son of him of Gaton, who was dead.

Thereupon Legard told Mr. Bolls there was a debt of £40 owing by his father to one Mr. Brampton, which Legard said was now due to him. Bolls replied Brampton owed his father 100 marks, for which he had a statute and judgment upon it. Legard said he never heard of any such thing. Bolls said it was true, and that Brampton was a base fellow and a footman. Legard said if he was a footman it was to a Queen, and that Brampton was a gent as well-descended as himself for ought he knew. Bolls said he lied; Legard thereupon struck him. Mr. Bolls dared him to fight with him and called him coward and schoolboy.

Legard accepted to fight with him and presently went together into a pit a little out of town to fight, nobody being with them but one Jackson, an acquaintance and friend of Mr. Bolls, who followed after him with his sword. Legard fought in his riding coat with a little stick in his left hand. A smith dwelling near the place seeing them draw their swords came to part them with a staff, but Jackson would not suffer him, but took the staff from him and with it stroke Legard's stick out of his hand as he was fighting.

Legard hurt Mr. Bolls in the shoulder slightly at the first encounter, and then they breathed; and at a second pass, Legard hurt him in the right arm, and then they breathed again. Legard took up his stick again, intending to have left, but Jackson stroke the same out of his hand again with his sword as he was fighting. Notwithstanding Legard hurt Mr. Bolls that time likewise in the arm, all of them being slight wounds and noways dangerous.

Legard, seeing Mr. Bolls hurt, moved to leave, saying they had done enough and that he hoped he had satisfied Mr. Bolls. But Mr. Bolls replied he was a coward. Legard said no, he hoped he had satisfied him otherwise, but said Mr. Bolls was hurt therefore he wished him to leave, which Mr. Bolls seemed to condescend unto. But Jackson said to Mr. Bolls, "I pray thee Dick, one bout more for my sake." Whereupon Mr. Bolls would needs fight again, and the place being straight where they fought and compassed with high hills, Legard went back till he had almost fallen on the hill, Mr. Bolls striking violently at him. It was Legard's unfortunate hap to hurt Mr. Bolls on the right side. Whereupon Mr. Bolls being ready to fall, Legard said, "Woe is me. I have done too much"; and Mr. Bolls about half-an-hour after died, but did before his death confess it was his own seeking and that he followed of his own death.

Whereupon the coroner's inquest being taken the next day, upon sight of the body and examination of witnesses found that your petitioner's said son had committed manslaughter in killing the said Mr. Bolls.

Your petitioner's humble suit unto Your sacred Majesty is that Your Majesty would graciously commiserate the sorrow of a father and vouchsafe your royal pardon to the said John Legard, his son, for the said offence of manslaughter and all penalties into which thereby he is liable, the rather for that your petitioner's said son has hitherto lived in a fair and peaceable manner without the stain of any open crime, and may hereafter be able as he is most bound to serve Your Majesty in the duty and faith of an obedient and loving subject.

"A Louth Duel," *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries* 2 (March 1890):57–59.

[1] Sir Robert Legard (1581–1648)
[2] John Legard (c. 1591–1643)