Edmund Dudley, The Tree of Common Wealth, 1509 [Auszug]


In 1506 Dudley was “president of the king’s council,” a small body of lawyers and fiscal administrators that helped reestablish the payment of feudal dues and of fines for lawbreaking. Charges that he defrauded the king—he amassed a fortune—and was otherwise guilty of corruption were not proved. In April 1509, just after the death of Henry VII, Dudley and Sir Richard Empson, another leader in the council, were arrested. Both were convicted of treason and were executed, largely because of Henry VIII’s desire for popularity.

Dudley wrote *The Tree of Commonwealth* (ed. D.M. Brodie, 1948) while in the Tower. It is informed with the irony and wit of a great advocate. In the work Dudley insists on punctual performance of duties by all ranks of society, inveighs against administrative abuses sanctioned by law, and urges moderation in the use of royal powers.

Dudley was the father of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, who virtually ruled England from 1549 to 1553, during the minority of Edward VI, and who was executed for seeking to prevent the succession of Mary I. He was the grandfather of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, a favourite of Elizabeth I.

aus: Encyclopedia Britannica
The

Tree of Common Wealth:

A Treatise by

Edmonde Dudiay, Esq.

Barrister-at-Law;

Sometime Speaker of the House of Commons; President of the Privy Council of Henry VIII.; and one of that King's Commissioners for receiving the Forfeitures of Penal Statutes.

Written by him

While a Prisoner in the Tower, in the Years 1509 and 1510, and under Sentence of Death for High Treason.

Now first Printed from a Copy of his Manuscript for the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross.

Manchester:
Printed by Charles Simms & Co.
1859.
Tree of Common Wealth.

This Booke, named the Tree of [Common Wealth, was] made by Edmonde Dudley Esquire, late com[mioner]. . . . Henrie the viijth, The same Edmonde at the . . . [? time of writing] hereof being prisoner in the towre, in the first y[ere of the raigne of] Kinge Henrie the viijth.

The effecte of this treatise consisteth in three speciall pointes, wth breeslie followeth. That is to saie —

First, the remembrance of God and of the faiithe of his holie churche, wth the wth thinge cui xpen prince hath greate neede to beginne.

Secondarie, of some condiçons & demeanoz necessarie in cuiy prince, both for his honoe and for the suertic of his contynuunce.

Thirdlie, of the Tree of coûon wealth, wth toucheth people of cuiy degree, of the Demeanoz and condiçons they shoulde be of.

Forasmuch as cuiy man is naturallie bounde not onlie moste hartelic to praine for the prosperous contynuance of his liegue Soueraigne Lorde, and thencreas of the coûon wealth of his natyve cuntrie, But also to the vtttermoste of his powre to doe all thinges that mighte further or sounde to thencreasse and helpe of
the same, And because I am an English man, and was sometyme a poore servant with the Kinge of moste noble memorie Henrie the Seventh late Kinge of this moste noble Realme of Englane (whose Soule Jesu pardon) naturall father to my moste redoubted souaigne Lorde Kinge Henrie of that name the viijth, whome our Saviour Xpiste Jesu saufely gyde, with the longe contynuance of vertue and honour. For (our Lorde graunting) this is the Prince that shall renewe the coëmon wealth within this his realme, the with this longe tym hath bene in sore decaie, whereof God helpinge, I moste . . . [unlearned and ignoraunte in all manner sciences and . . . [after] the maister of a unlearned body will write . . . [remembrance] brance, the with if men be soe pleased maie . . . [be called] the Tree of coëmon wealth. But of the . . .

... And nowe to speake of the Tree of coëmon wealth. It is that thinge, for the with all true englishmen have great neede to praiue to god, that our Lorde and Kinge will thereon have a singuler regarde and favoor, for principalie by god and him yt must be holpen. And therefore god hath ordained him to be our Kinge, and thereto is euy Kinge bounde, for that is his charde. For as
the subiectes are bounde to their prince of their allegiance, to
lone, dreae, serue and obey him, or else to be punished by him,
as straightlie is the Prince bounde to god to maintaine and supporte,
as farre as in him is or lieth, the common wealth of his sub-
iectes. And all they abide and see the punishment of god, for
though the people be Subiectes to their Kinge, yet they be the
people of god, And god hath ordained their Prince to protecte
them, and they to obey their Prince. The common wealth of this
realme, or of the subiectes or inhabitant thereof, may be re-
sembled to a faire and a greate mightie tree, growing in a faire
feilde or pasture, vnder the shadowe or Covert whereof all the
beast, both the fatte and the leane, are protected and comforted
fró heathe and colde as the tyme requireth; Even so all the Sub-
iectes of that realme where this tree of common wealth doth surelie
growe, be thereby holpen and relieved from the highest degree to
the lowest. But for a troth this tree will not longe stande or
growe vprighte in this realme or in anie other without dulle
stronge rootes and sure fastened in the grounde. The principall
and chiefe roote of this tree in euy xpen realme must be the love
of god, And the love of god is nothing els, but to knowe him and
gladlie to observe his lawes and coñmandme as his true and
faithfull people. Ye will say pease the Bissheps and they of the
spiritualtie haue speciall chardge of this roote, and not the Prince.
Yes, verelie, the Prince is the grounde out of the wch this roote
must chieflie growe, for that it is he that doth appointe and make
the Bissheps. And if the Prince in theise roomes ordaine vertu-
ous men, this roote will keepe. And if he ordaine thereto vicious
men or negligent bodies, yt will wyther and decaie, And though
the Bissheps would be negligent and not punishe the mysdoers
in their Dioces, yet let the Prince warne them thereof, And if
there be anie sturdie or obstinate psions in his realme, that will
frowardlie disobey their ordinarie in the cause of god, the Prince
must put to his mightie hande, to help to the reformation thereof. And if there be, whome doth the Prince then assiste? The Bishops, Curates or preachers? Forsooth none of them. He assisteth his maker and redeemer, of whome he hath all his powre and anuthoritie. And such as bene knowne for open synners within this realme, as open murtherers, adulterers, blasphemers, extorcioners, and oppressors of his subjectes, let not the Prince be famyliar with them, nor shewe vnto them his loving countenaunce, but let them be rather by themselues alone, that some man maie knowe the cause whie. And that shall not cause them only to amende, pcase, rather then all the monicos of theire Curate or Ordenaries, But also it shall cause other to beware of like offences, to the greate merit of the prince. Then the roote of the lawe of god, wh is to knowe him with good workes, within this realme must highlie growe, by our Souaigne Lord and out of him. Yet for the sure and pfit fastening of this roote in the Kinge [one thinge] is verie necessarie and that is: That all his subjectes spiritual and temporall may see in theire Prince, that he himself setteth his principall delight and affeccion in the lawe of god, keping his lawes and cohaundem. Howe much shall that enforce and incourrage the Bishops and other of the Spuitie to be the very lanthornes of light, and to shewe good examples to the temporaltie, and they to followe the same. And how much shame or rebuke should it be to all those that woulde use the contrarie. And then is this principall roote the love of god soe surelie fastened in soc noble and perfit grounde rooted, that with the grace of god he shall doe his devot to beare vp this tree of coyon wealth in this realme of england foreu. Besides this principall roote, this tree surelie to be borne vp, must haue sowre other rootes, That is to saie: Justice, truth, concorde, and peace. First he must haue the roote of Justice, without the with this tree of coyon wealth maie not continue. And this roote of justice must needs come of our [...]

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