

# DESCRIPTION OF CARDINAL WOLSEY

## Sebastian Giustiniani to the Venetian Senate

10 September 1519

The Cardinal of York is the same as he whom I have styled Orion in a work composed by me. He is of low origin and has two brothers, one of whom holds an untitled benefice, and the other is pushing his fortune. He rules both the king and the entire kingdom. On my first arrival in England he used to say to me, "His Majesty will do so and so." Subsequently, by degrees, he forgot himself, and commenced saying, "We shall do so and so." At this present he has reached such a pitch that he says, "I shall do so and so." He is about forty-six years old, very handsome, learned, extremely eloquent, of vast ability and indefatigable. He alone transacts the same business as that which occupies all the magistracies, offices and councils of Venice, both civil and criminal, and all state affairs likewise are managed by him, let their nature be what it may.

He is thoughtful, and has the reputation of being extremely just. He favors the people exceedingly, and especially the poor, hearing their suits and seeking to dispatch them instantly. He also makes the lawyers plead *gratis* for all who are poverty-stricken. He is in very great repute, seven times more so than if he were Pope. He has a very fine palace, where one traverses eight rooms before reaching his audience chamber. They are all hung with tapestry which is changed once a week. Wherever he is, he always has a sideboard of plate worth 25.000 ducats. His silver is estimated at 150.000 ducats. In his own chamber there is always a cupboard with vessels to the amount of 30.000 ducats, as is customary with the English nobility. He is supposed to be very rich indeed in money, plate, and household stuff.

The Archbishopric of York yields him about 14.000 ducats, and the bishopric of Bath 8.000. One-third of the fees derived from the great seal are his, the other two are divided between the King and the Chancellor. The Cardinal's share amounts to about 5.000 ducats. By New Year's gifts he makes about 15.000 ducats.

University of Pennsylvania, Department of History. *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1900), I:2-3.