

**HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPT
COMMISSION. ELEVENTH REPORT,
APPENDIX, PART I. THE MANUSCRIPTS
OF HENRY DUNCAN SKRINE, ESQ.
SALVETTI CORRESPONDENCE**

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HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION.

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ELEVENTH REPORT, APPENDIX, PART I.

Salvetti, Amerigo

THE

MANUSCRIPTS

OF

HENRY DUNCAN SKRINE, Esq.

SALVETTI CORRESPONDENCE.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



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THE MANUSCRIPTS OF HENRY DUNCAN
SKRINE, ESQUIRE, OF CLAVERTON MANOR,
SOMERSET.

SALVETTI CORRESPONDENCE.

The originals of the following letters are preserved in the Archives of Florence and were written by a certain Alessandro Antelminelli, a native of Lucca, who adopted the name of Amerigo Salvetti and was for many years the representative of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany at the English Court. They are written in the Tuscan dialect, and partly in cipher, and were translated, in 1881, by the late Mr. Heath Wilson of Florence, shortly before his death. Mr. Wilson's manuscript translation, together with his interesting biographical preface and copious illustrative notes, having been submitted to the Historical Manuscript Commission, by Mr. H. D. Skrine, of Claverton Manor, Somerset, the Commissioners decided so far to avail themselves of Mr. Wilson's labours as to print amongst their Reports his translation of these letters. The latter have never before been published and they show how English affairs were regarded by an intelligent resident foreigner at the commencement of the reign of King Charles the First. In 1859 the originals of these despatches, together with the rest of the official correspondence of Signor Salvetti and his son, were copied from the Medicean Archives for the Trustees of the British Museum, and the transcripts then made are frequently consulted for the light which they throw on the history of the period that they cover.*

MSS. OF
H. D. SKRINE,
Esq.

Amerigo Salvetti (or, more correctly, Alessandro Antelminelli) was born about 1572 and came of a noble family of Lucca. In 1596, whilst he was engaged in business in Antwerp, his father and his three brothers were first tortured and then executed on a charge of high treason against the Republic of Lucca. Alessandro was at the same time summoned home by the Magistrates of Lucca to stand his trial for his alleged participation in the conspiracy of his relatives, but before his arrival he was condemned to death. A price was also set upon his head and assassins were hired to kill him. He learnt these facts whilst on his way to Lucca, to answer the charges brought against him, and then turned aside to Florence. After a brief stay at Florence he fled to London, which, however, he soon left, finding his life in danger from the emissaries of Lucca. In 1599 he took the name of Amerigo Salvetti, giving himself out to be a Florentine, and he travelled on the continent for a few years; but wherever he went he was pursued by agents of the government of Lucca seeking to kill him. For some time he travelled with Sir Henry Wotton and a son of Sir Edward Wotton, but this intimacy, as the Archives of Lucca prove, did not prevent Sir Henry Wotton plotting in 1607 to give him up to the Magistrates of Lucca in exchange for a Captain Robert Elliot whom King James the First was anxious to get into his power. Ferdinand Grand Duke of Tuscany frustrated Wotton's plot, and sent Elliot out of danger under a strong escort. Salvetti then came to London, where he resided for the rest of

* These transcripts are preserved in the British Museum Library under the press-mark Add. MSS. No. 27962.

MSS. OF
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Esq.

his life; and in 1616 he was appointed, by Cosmo de' Medici, the Tuscan Resident at the Court of Whitehall.

The attempts of the government of Lucca to procure the assassination of Salvetti were repeatedly renewed for many years, and lasted at least until 1627, as is shown by letters preserved in the Archives of Lucca, translations of many of which are printed in the second part of this report. In 1620 a certain Michele Balbani, who had undertaken to procure the assassination of Salvetti, writes to Lucca that he had found willing agents for that purpose but that, one after another, they all excused themselves from making the attempt in London "where every citizen was a policeman."

The story of Salvetti's life is set out in detail in a privately printed pamphlet by the Cavaliere Salvatore Bongi, Keeper of the Archives of Lucca. Salvetti continued to act as the Tuscan representative at the English Court until his death in London, at the age of 85, on the 2nd of July 1657, and lies buried under the chancel of St. Bartholomew's Church. His son, Giovanni Salvetti Antelminelli, was appointed to succeed him, as Tuscan Resident at the Court of Whitehall, and held that post until the commencement of the year 1679.

H. BARR TOMKINS.

I. DESPATCHES FROM THE TUSCAN RESIDENT AT THE COURT OF WHITEHALL TO HIS SERENE HIGHNESS THE GRAND DUKE AT FLORENCE.

London, 11th April 1625.

The news of the death of King James must have been known in Florence long before this despatch can arrive there. A special courier was immediately sent by the Venetian Ambassadors to make the occurrence known to their Republic. I took the opportunity of sending a short letter to the Tuscan Resident at Milan—Signor Buondelmonte—and it was consigned by the Ambassadors to their courier with instructions to deliver it. I hope that he has done so, and that the Resident, as I requested, forwarded the intelligence to you.

The good King died on Sunday the sixth of this month about noon* to the great sorrow of the courtiers and especially of the Scotch, who, with this bereavement, have lost their chief support. His Majesty desired to partake of his communion at the hands of the Bishop of Lincoln, Keeper of the Great Seal, and he made in the Lord Keeper's presence, and that of other Bishops, a public confession and affirmation of his faith, declaring that it had always been Protestant without any mixture of Roman Catholicism as had been imputed to him by some persons. He added that if it had been needful he would have considered it happiness had he been called upon to suffer martyrdom for the maintenance and increase of his faith. On the following Saturday morning the King lost the power of speech, and, although he made several efforts to address the Prince and members of the Privy Council who were present, he was unable to utter a single word which could be understood. It is said that the day before—that is, on Friday—he gave the Prince a paper, written by his own hand, containing various statements; but of the truth of this there is no information on which we can depend.

With the death of the King the authority of all the Crown officials terminated. Consequently the Dignitaries of the kingdom who were

* King James died on the 27th March 1625, old style.

present presented themselves in a body to the Prince, and, having condoled with him on the death of his Father, they besought his permission to assemble together for consultation in this crisis on what might be most expedient for his service. They held a Council and resolved to proclaim the Prince King without loss of time. The proclamation was read in front of Theobalds, the Royal mansion—where His late Majesty expired—declaring him King of England, France, Scotland and Ireland, and Defender of the Faith. This done they proceeded to London, where, accompanied by the Magistrates of the City, who were on horseback, they again proclaimed King Charles in various places with the customary ceremonies and with all his titles. The people listened with evident appearances of satisfaction.

MSS. OF
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ESQ.

On the same evening the new King drove to London in his carriage, accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham, and went to reside in his usual abode till such time as the Royal palace could be prepared and the rooms hung with black cloth.

All the nobility in London or its neighbourhood were received by His Majesty, and kissed his hand. His demeanour was calm and his manner gracious.

The Duke of Buckingham, although deeply grieved by the loss of the late King his ever-liberal master, may feel assured that the countenance and favour of the new King will be extended to him to a greater degree if it be possible. This is already shown by the most transparent evidence. He is with His Majesty all day, he sleeps in a room contiguous to the Royal chamber, he has been confirmed in all his offices which are numerous and of the highest importance, and he has also been made Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and has received the Golden Key, the emblem of his office, so that he can, whenever he pleases and at any hour, enter that chamber as well as any other part of the palace occupied by His Majesty. In fine, nothing is done without him.

The first act of King Charles has been to confirm all the Members of his father's Privy Council in their offices, and on Monday last they took the usual oaths, with the exception of Lord Baltimore, Secretary of State, who remarked to His Majesty that, as every one knew him to be a Catholic, he could not now serve him in the same high office without exciting jealousy in others, nor was he willing to take an oath so wounding to his religious feelings. It is said that His Majesty replied "that it was much better thus to state his opinions, rather than to retain his office by equivocation, as some did," which the King could not approve. In like manner all the former officers of the Court, all the Governors of Provinces, Judges, and others who administer justice, have been confirmed in their posts by Royal proclamation. Some have been reappointed by returning to them their seals of office, or their official keys or rods, or other emblems of their positions, all of which had been placed in the hands of His Majesty on the death of King James.

Orders have been given to reappoint all the Ambassadors, Agents and Commissioners, employed abroad, and to send them new credentials. The same steps are to be taken by foreign Princes with respect to their representatives in England who are only recognised as private persons till this is done.

New Commissions have been issued to the Viceroy of Ireland and the Lord High Chancellor of Scotland for the good government of these realms.

The servants of His Majesty whilst he was Prince were discharged on Monday last, as he would not make any change in the household of his father, and those who served him whilst Prince will be employed

MSS. OF
H. D. SKRINE,
Esq.

otherwise, or will be provided for in some way, or will be rewarded according to the nature of the offices which they held.

The body of His late Majesty is to be brought from Theobalds to London on Monday next, and will be accompanied by all the nobility at present residing in the vicinity, their presence having been commanded with their carriages and servants all of whom are to be in mourning.

The Royal corpse will be deposited in the palace known as Denmark House, so called by the late Queen, wife of King James, and it will remain there till the period of the obsequies, which it is believed will take place a month hence with all that magnificence which is usual with English Kings, and which indeed is wonderful. The cost will be at least two hundred thousand crowns in gold.

It is calculated that King James died in the sixtieth year of his age, after a reign of fifty-eight years and eight months over Scotland.* The King was happily endowed with moral virtues and with literary tastes. He was pacific by nature, which many called timidity, as well as lenient, and averse to the shedding of blood.

Wise government by the new King may be anticipated. There is nothing to fear except a rupture with Spain, caused by the abiding feeling of displeasure with which he remembers the provocation which he received when he visited that country to marry the Infanta. There are already symptoms of the coming quarrel.

His Majesty two days ago gave orders to expedite as much as possible the preparation of a naval armament, which will be one of the greatest and most powerful which ever issued from the ports of this kingdom. He also gave instructions for the reinforcement and payment of the English soldiers under Mansfeldt, and under other officers in the service of the Dutch. These proceedings are sufficiently significant.

There can be no doubt that the death of King James must delay the marriage of King Charles for some time, for the conditions drawn up and agreed to were in the name of the late King. It will therefore be necessary to re-open negotiations. As, however, the general conditions are established both sides may come to a prompt agreement.

The Duke of Buckingham has recalled his magnificent carriages and horses, which he sent last week to Dover, for conveyance to France, to wait for him at St. Denis, near Paris. The general opinion now is, that he will not go to the Court of His Most Christian Majesty to act as proxy for King Charles in the approaching marriage ceremony, but that His Majesty's procurator will be sent to whatever personage His Most Christian Majesty may select. The prevalent idea is that he will nominate Monsieur his brother.

The French ought immediately to send an Ambassador with the usual condolences and congratulations, to whom they may at the same time give the requisite powers to arrange with the King as to the terms of the settlements which were before agreed upon between the Secretary Monsieur La Ville-aux-Clercs and His late Majesty.

With regard to the affairs of the Catholics nothing can be predicted at present with any certainty. For them the worst omen is the wish of His Majesty to assemble Parliament on the 27th of May next, for it is certain to be hostile to them and to their religion.

Sir Humphrey May, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and a Minister of the Crown, was appointed a member of the Star Chamber yesterday, and Sir Edward Conway, Secretary of State, was made a Peer.

* King James the First died in his fifty-eighth year, having reigned over Scotland fifty-seven years eight months and five days. [H.B.T.]

Every one turns his eyes towards the new sun and with listening ears seeks to penetrate His Majesty's intentions, which all alike believe to mean war.

MSS. OF
H. D. SKRINZ,
Esq.

London, 18th April 1625.

As I have remarked in a former dispatch, it is very desirable that France should reconstitute the Embassy here without delay, and should send another Ambassador with full credentials to renew and complete the negotiations regarding the Royal marriage.

It is not likely that any difficulties will present themselves if the two Kings adhere to the settlement arranged with His late Majesty, and provided that no new suggestions are made with reference to the position of the Roman Catholic subjects of this country.

Any further interference with that argument might easily lead to unforeseen collision with perilous rocks, the situation of which is unknown since the death of the late King, whose temperate disposition led him to modify the operations of the penal laws against the Catholics. Whether it be from the impending opening of Parliament, to which His Majesty would not willingly give any reasons for dissatisfaction, or whether it be from any other motives, it is perfectly clear to all that, if the King is too much pressed by the French on any question touching the religion of the people, difficulties may be at once created in the principal subject of negotiation; especially after the promise, which he made when Prince, that on the occasion of his marriage he would not yield on this topic.

Undoubtedly there will be danger if the marriage settlements cannot be completed before the meeting of Parliament on the 17th of May next, for a debate on religion might be raised with disastrous consequences. It would certainly be connected with the grants of money for the promotion of political schemes, and this might lead to a compromise on the religious question, to induce Parliament to vote supplies, which might be full of peril to the Roman Catholics.*

Yesterday the writs for the election of Members of Parliament were dispatched to all parts of the kingdom. It is set forth that the elections are to be conducted in conformity with law and usage. Notwithstanding this declaration, it appears that the Puritanical faction is already exciting tumults that they may make sure of a majority. Another section of the voters are adherents of the Anglican Church, but they are a minority. As to the Catholics they are almost entirely excluded as they are from all government employment.

On Saturday last Sir George Goring returned from France, having, it is said, adjusted the question of the suite which Madame will bring with her to England.

Owing to the death of King James it has again become necessary to consult the wishes of His Most Christian Majesty, and on this side new documents are prepared, confirmatory of what had been already agreed upon, together with some additions considered necessary before the negotiations can be said to be complete.

It is now quite certain that the Duke of Buckingham is not to stand proxy for His Majesty at the ceremony of the approaching marriage, but it is said that a procurator will be sent to enable His Serene Highness the Duke de Chevreuse to act in that capacity, the Prince being a relative of the future Queen of England.

* This is a remarkable statement on the part of Salvetti, showing his insight into the condition of public opinion, and his just estimate of what would be likely to happen. His prophecy was verified.

MSS. OF
H. D. SKELTON,
ESQ.

The resident Ambassador of His Most Christian Majesty, and, following his example, the Venetian Ambassador, have paid their respects to the new King, but in their capacities as private persons only their new credentials not having arrived. Both were dressed in mourning, as are all the foreign political Agents to this Court.

The body of the defunct King was brought on Monday last from Theobalds to London, at about three o'clock in the morning, and it was accompanied by all the Court, and by numbers of the nobility at present resident in the neighbourhood, all being dressed in mourning. It was conveyed to Denmark House, where it will remain, and will be guarded day and night by the late King's Courtiers. No doubt the chamber where the body lies in state will be visited by crowds of the people till the eighteenth of May, the day fixed for the Royal obsequies, after which the coronation of King Charles will take place as soon as possible; and who knows but that we may have the Queen here also, to take her part in this great ceremony with its enormous cost of thousands of pounds sterling and its other troubles.

A member of the Court will be dispatched by His Majesty to-morrow to the Hague, to visit on his part his sister the Princess Palatine, to communicate to her in a formal manner the death of their father, and to assure her of her Royal brother's affection. The messenger will present her with ten thousand crowns and enough black cloth to dress in mourning, herself, the Prince her husband, their children, and all their household.

The Duke of Buckingham is somewhat indisposed; he continues to hold all his offices, is in the greatest favour with the King, and consequently is more powerful than ever.

Sir Walter Aston, Ambassador to His Catholic Majesty, arrived a few days ago from Spain. If King James had been alive, His Excellency would have returned in due time to his post; but, owing to the great change in policy which has taken place, he will not. He has consequently sent for his family and suite, all of whom he had left in Spain. If any representative is sent to the Spanish Court, it will be some one of less rank. In all probability the Secretary of Sir Walter Aston will be appointed.

Plague has broken out in Lincoln, and twelve persons died this week; but I believe that those who have charge of the returns conceal the real numbers as much as possible, and that the number of deaths has been in reality more numerous.

London, 25th April 1625.

Now that all the despatches to foreign countries have been completed on the part of the Court here, announcing the death of King James and the succession to the Crown of his son King Charles, and that new credentials have been given to Ambassadors and Representatives abroad, His Majesty has found time to attend to the organization of his Court and Household, showing himself in all things so strict that already a great change is observable. Dignity, respectful demeanour, and regularity, are insisted upon; from which every one may readily conjecture how much weight His Majesty will attach to deference and obedience in matters of serious importance. The King has made it known that whoever may have business with him must never approach him by indirect ways, by back stairs or private doors leading to his apartments, nor by means of retainers or grooms of the Chambers, as was done in the lifetime of his father, but by the public rooms and approaches and on days of the week set apart for receptions. His Majesty will not permit Nobles or Members of the Privy Council to enter the gallery or private