

**A DIALOGUE OR
CONFABULATION
BETWEEN TWO
TRAVELLERS**

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A Dialogue or Confabulation Between Two Travellers by William Spelman

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WILLIAM SPELMAN

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BETWEEN TWO TRAVELLERS
WHICH TREATETH OF CIVILE AND POLLITIKE
GOUVERNEMENT
IN DYVERS KINGDOMES & CONTRIES

PRINTED FROM THE MS. OF THE AUTHOR

WILLIAM SPELMAN

WRITTEN CIRCA 1580

EDITED, WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION, BY

J. E. LATTON PICKERING

Librarian to the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple

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INTRODUCTION.

WILLIAM SPELMAN, the author of this "Dialogue," in which he takes the pseudonym of Selvaggio, was a younger son of Sir John Spelman, of Narborough, in Norfolk, who was one of the Justices of the King's Bench, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Frowyk, and grand-daughter of Sir Thomas Frowyk, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. He was educated at Magdalen College, Cambridge, but does not appear to have graduated. He travelled in the Netherlands and other foreign countries. A passport was granted to him by Jean de Croy, Comte de Roeux, at Bruges, 5th April, 1572. In 1573 he was engaged in an expedition, on behalf of the King of Spain, in the Low Countries. He married Catherine, daughter of Cornelius van Stonhove, a Judge in Holland.* On page 3, Selvaggio says: "god of his goodnes dyd gyve me a wyfe of Generouse birth of the howse of Sconehone in Holland." By her he had five children, some of whom, together with his wife, he lost early in life. Apparently he soon re-married, and again to a Dutch lady of some wealth (p. 7).

The manuscript is written in an Elizabethan hand on what is technically known as "pot" paper, so called from the design of the water-mark, the date of which Sir E. Maunde Thompson, to whose courtesy I am much indebted, judges from his experience to

* See "Reliquie Spelmannianæ" and Visit: of Norfolk [Harl. Soc. vol. 32].

to be about 1580. Written in faint pencil on a blank page opposite the title and in a modern handwriting is the following:

"The water-mark on the paper at the end is an ornamented pot surmounted by a quatrefoil very like what is in my volume of the date 1598."

The MS. forms a small quarto volume, consisting of one hundred and nine leaves. At the top of the first page appears the name "Willyam Spelmann." The Dialogue itself commences on the first page of the fourth leaf, a facsimile of which has been made, and is bound up to face the corresponding page of printed matter. The manuscript, which is half-bound in green morocco, was formerly in the collection of Mr. Dawson Turner, and was sold with a portion of his library in June, 1859, when it probably came into the possession of His Excellency M. Sylvain Van de Weyer, and was added to the Library now located at New Lodge, Windsor Forest. On one of the several blank pages bound up at the beginning of the volume there is a note, made in 1842, by Sir Francis Palgrave, Deputy Keeper of the Public Records:

"A manuscript with the name W^m. Spelman, apparently in his own writing, on the flyleaf, p. 1, but which begins at p. 4." [Then follows title.]

"This is a very curious and amusing dialogue, well worthy of being printed, as containing many interesting anecdotes and observations, both upon the state of society and people on the Continent—particularly in the Low Countries—and also in England. In the latter, there is a detailed and curious account of the manner in which Bishop Hooper used to pass his time."

The internal evidences of the knowledge of the writer of the facts he sets out are numerous and convincing. Wherever I have had particular occasion to investigate a statement of the author, ample confirmation of its authenticity has been forthcoming.

Selvaggio's account of his parentage (p. 2) is confirmed by the
pedigree

pedigree of the Spelman family set out in *Reliquiæ Spelmannianæ*, fol., Oxford, 1698.

He was the eleventh of thirteen sons that his mother bore, but as the two youngest died in infancy, his statement, that he was the youngest, may in that sense be accepted. There were seven daughters. Sir Henry Spelman, the celebrated Antiquary, was a son of Henry Spelman, the fourth of the sons, and our author was therefore his uncle. Early in his narrative he mentions "my Cosyne Mack, mack Williams." In the Spelman pedigree before mentioned, it is set out that Anna, sister to our author's father, married Henry Mack Williams, so that any children they may have had would be his first cousins. Selvaggio relates (p. 15) how his vessel was carried off from Yarmouth by a thief or rover from Flushing. His account of his losses, and the action he took to make them good, the advice he received to apply to the Duke of Alva for a letter of mark, is graphically narrated. Here again I have discovered confirmation of Selvaggio's story. The Duke of Alva's steward was a certain Senor Jan Moreno, whom our author mentions and whom he calls provider of the King's navy. Amongst the volumes of the Tanner manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, vol. 80, fol. 21, is thus described:

"Letters and papers relating to Will. Spelman's expedition in behalf of the King of Spain against the Low Countries, most of them from Juan de Moreno, in Dutch and French; an. 1573."

Some letters are from Spelman, and are in the same handwriting as that of the manuscript of the "Dialogue."

There is also a document containing accounts in Spelman's writing, and dated 1573. In this are mentioned payments of substantial sums to Captain Nicolson, Captain North, &c., mentioned at p. 15 of the "Dialogue," and other payments made at Rochester and Queenborough, the total sum amounting to £1,067 6s. 8d.

Mention



Mention is also made in these accounts of payments to the Captain of the "Phoenix," the purchase of which vessel is mentioned on page 22 of the "Dialogue."

Selvaggio's account of the amount of his allowances amounting to nearly £300 per month, his satisfaction at his high estate in being made General over twelve Captains and their ships, with eight hundred mariners and soldiers at his command, the grandeur of his personal retinue, are all minutely described; and at this period of his career he was, as he thought, "clymynge uppe upon the higheste topp of ffortunes wheele." A description of the capture of a Boyer coming up from Margate into the Thames, and subsequent proceedings, suggest that Selvaggio was not particular as to the vessels against whom he proceeded, and that his actions partook very much of those of a privateer. However this may have been, certain of his fellows apparently gave information to the Lords of the Council of his doings, and by their order he was apprehended at Yarmouth, whilst other of his ships were taken at Harwich and carried to Chatham, and, as he puts in a side-note, all was turned topsy-turvy. Then follows an account of his endeavours, by interest at Court, to have his ships and goods restored to him, but without avail. Selvaggio ends the accounts of this transaction by a grim recital of the evil fates that befell his false comrades.

Details of the losses suffered in the way of trade and more legitimate enterprise follows, and mention is made of the lease of a farm called the Garret, granted by the Abbot of Merton. The interesting note (p. 31), furnished to me by my friend Mr. Stuart Moore, corroborates in a remarkable manner the facts related by Selvaggio, and the date 1571 is two years prior to that of the letters of mark granted to him by the Duke of Alva. The first part of the "Dialogue" ends with the details of a transaction by which "Selvaggio" was defrauded of fifty pounds, for which the