

**PRYINGS AMONG  
PRIVATE PAPERS, CHIEFLY  
OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES**

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Pryings among private papers, chiefly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Thomas Longueville

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**THOMAS LONGUEVILLE**

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*Longman, Thomas*

PRYINGS AMONG  
PRIVATE PAPERS

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AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
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## P R E F A C E

IT has been the lot of the present writer, in the course of certain biographical studies, to look through many volumes of the *Reports of the Royal Historical Commission*. In every instance he had to limit his researches to special subjects; but the temptation to turn aside and read the odds and ends of gossip, or fact, that casually met his eye, was often almost too strong to be resisted. As a bribe to keep himself strictly to the subjects in hand, he promised himself, on some future occasion, to look through the same volumes, reading the odds and ends, and the odds and ends only, carefully eschewing everything biographical, historical, political, or instructive; in short, instead of searching diligently for the important, to look lazily for the unimportant. Having copied out many of the passages that took his fancy when he fulfilled this promise, it occurred to him that it might be worth while to give others an opportunity of looking at them, not so much for the value of the extracts themselves as to attract the attention of ordinary readers to a series of volumes

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constituting a literary mine, rich in treasures of very various descriptions. He hopes that the following hodge-podge may at least demonstrate the fact that the *Reports of the Historical Commission* are by no means limited to the subject of history technically so called; that they may be found a veritable happy hunting-ground for the curiosity-hunter; and that they are as open to the depredations of the flippant dipper and skipper as to the profound researches of the grave student.

This volume is not strictly speaking a book. It can scarcely be even called so much as a piece of book-making. It is a mere collection of extracts. If few should care to read much of it, perhaps something more than a few may take it up and glance at some of its anecdotes of the past relating to matters in which they happen to feel an interest.

Although the title, *Pryings Among Private Papers*, exactly describes the contents of the pages it precedes, no undue inquisitiveness or breach of confidence has been committed in their compilation or publication; for the owners of those private papers had already permitted them to be examined and published by the officials of the British Government. On the other hand, the papers from which extracts have been made are private, the compiler having avoided all the parliamentary, corporation,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Except in one or two instances.



ecclesiastical and borough papers of which the *Historical Commission* publishes a very large number.

The question presented itself on what principle a number of extracts, about a great variety of subjects, should be arranged and introduced. A certain anecdote-monger had a favourite story about a gun. When sitting at dinner, he used to knock under the table with his knee, and exclaim: "What was that noise? Was it a gun? By the way, talking of guns—" and then he told his story. The compiler of the following extracts has kept this noble example before his mind when at a loss for an introduction to a fresh subject.

Some of the extracts given in these pages have already appeared in other books besides the *Reports of the Historical Commission*; but it is hoped that they may bear yet another repetition. The compiler—or shall we call him the extractor?—does not profess to have read the volumes which he has examined very carefully, and possibly, among the collections of papers from which he has made extracts, there may be many passages far more entertaining than those that caught his eye. Moreover, he has only glanced through a limited number of the volumes published by the *Commission*, publications rapidly developing into a considerable library in themselves.

He has the pleasure of expressing his thanks for much valuable assistance from Mr. Walter Herries Pollock. And it is his duty to acknowledge the kindness of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office, in granting him permission to reproduce various extracts from the *Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission*.

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