

**THE FORTESCUE PAPERS; CONSISTING
CHIEFLY OF LETTERS RELATING TO
STATE AFFAIRS, COLLECTED BY JOHN
PACKER, SECRETARY TO GEORGE
VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM**

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The Fortescue Papers; consisting chiefly of letters relating to state Affairs, collected by John Packer, secretary to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham by Samuel Rawson Gardiner

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SAMUEL RAWSON GARDINER

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THE
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LETTERS RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS,
COLLECTED BY JOHN PACKER,
SECRETARY TO GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

EDITED,
FROM THE ORIGINAL MSS. IN THE POSSESSION OF THE HON. G. M. FORTESCUE,
BY
SAMUEL RAWSON GARDINER,
DIRECTOR OF THE CAMDEN SOCIETY.



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PREFACE.

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FOR the papers in this volume the Camden Society is indebted to the liberality of the Honorable G. M. Fortescue, who, "on coming into possession of Dropmore in 1864, under the will of Lady Grenville—the heiress and sole representative of the Pitts of Bconnoc—found in the carpenter's shed an old box which had apparently belonged to Governor Pitt, containing a large quantity of papers in excellent condition, mixed up with the family papers of Mr. Van den Bempde, who died in 1725."¹ If I may judge by an indorsement in the handwriting of the 18th century, on the back of one of the letters, the collection narrowly escaped a still worse fate than that to which it was temporarily exposed. It is as follows, as far as it can be read, part of the paper on which it is written having been torn away:—"Marq. of Bucks on State affairs. . . . ers to others, &c. Eliz. & Ja. — useless."

The selections which I have made include many papers which will only be of interest to the professed historian, many which, had the originals been in a public library, so as to be easily accessible to the inquirer, I should certainly have omitted. But there are others

¹ I quote these statements from Sir Erskine Perry's communication to the Philobiblon Society on the Van den Bempde Papers, of which he has kindly sent me a copy, accompanying it with information acquired by him in preparing them for the press.

which will no doubt attract more general attention. Such for instance is the important letter of James I. (No. XXXIV.) clearing up as it does a question about the procedure in Raleigh's case after his return from Guiana, upon which no light has hitherto been thrown, and showing that, at least in James's eyes, it was proved that he had recommended an attack upon the Mexico fleet very early in his voyage. After this may be mentioned the letters of Sir Robert Dudley (No. III.), giving an account of his improvements in naval architecture; of Lord Arundel of Wardour (No. X.), bringing forward a charge against Bacon, which happens to be capable of disproof; of Sir Thomas Wentworth (No. XI.), supplying a missing link in the correspondence on the office of *custos rotulorum* published in the Strafford Papers; of Sir Sebastian Harvey (Nos. LII. and LIII.), throwing light on Christopher Villiers' courtship; and of Charles I. (No. CLXI.), giving an account to Prince Rupert of his victory over Essex in Cornwall. Letters more or less on business matters will also be found from Buckingham himself, from Lord Keeper Williams, from Secretaries Naunton and Calvert, from Sir Lionel Cranfield, the Earl of Suffolk, and other notabilities of the Court of James I. Of a different kind of interest, though if it be read in connection with the remainder of Effiat's correspondence, its historical importance is considerable, is No. CXLV. From it we learn what sort of French Buckingham could write, when he tried his hand at original composition in that language.

The whole of the collection placed in my hands consisted of five hundred and eight documents. A calendar of the whole has been prepared for the Historical MSS. Commission, and will no doubt appear in their second report. It is a collection which has evidently

been brought together from at least two, and perhaps from more sources.

The three last papers, all of them in print already, two letters of the first Earl of Clarendon and one of Madame de Maintenon, do not call for any comment. They may have been acquired by anybody at any time. Before these comes the letter of Charles I. mentioned above, which is believed to have been purchased by Lord Grenville, who was interested in it as being dated from Boconnoc. The remaining papers, five hundred and four in all, form the old collection, in which the last dated one was written in May 1627, and the first in June 1568. These papers seem to have found their way into the possession of the Pitt family from Mr. John Van den Bempde, who had purchased the estate of Hackness, in Yorkshire, from the Sydenham family, in 1707.¹

How they passed into the hands of the Pitts does not appear, but it is certain that they were in Mr. Van den Bempde's possession at the beginning of the 18th century, partly because no one else, as will be seen, was in a position to unite so heterogeneous a collection, and partly because twenty-two holograph letters of Lord Bacon, which form its most valuable portion, were printed by Stephens in his second collection. Mr. Spedding, who examined the papers two years ago, found not only many of those printed in the present volume named in a MS. catalogue by Stephens, but a note (Add. MSS. 4258, fol. 95) in the handwriting of John Locker, "who edited Stephens's second collection after his death," in the following words :—

Mr. Bemde, a g[entleman] of D[utch] extr[action], gave Mr. Stephens those

¹ The Van den Bempde Papers, 22.