

**THE DESPATCHES AND
CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHN, SECOND
EARL OF
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, AMBASSADOR TO
THE COURT OF CATHERINE II OF RUSSIA,
1762-1765. VOL. I**

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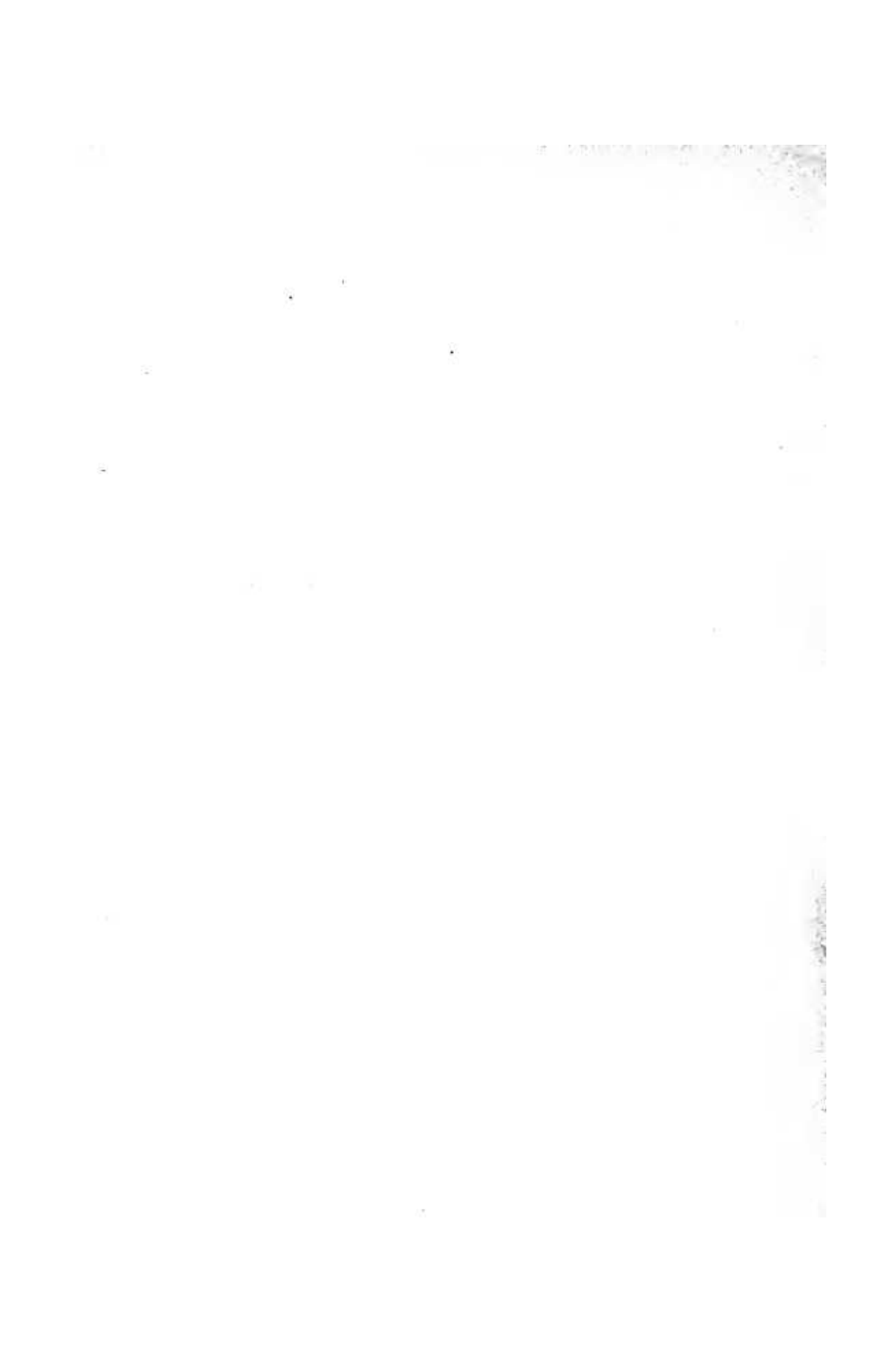
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Vol. I.



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The Despatches and Correspondence of John, Second Earl of Buckinghamshire, Ambassador to the Court of Catherine II. of Russia 1762-1765

EDITED FOR THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

ADELAIDE D'ARCY COLLYER

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PREFACE

THE greater part of the papers of John Hobart, second Earl of Buckinghamshire, were found three years ago at Blickling, in Norfolk, in a cabinet where it seems probable they had lain undisturbed since they were docketed and put away by their owner at the end of the last century.

Already in 1874 the Historical Manuscript Commission briefly noticed in their first Report Lord Buckinghamshire's despatches from St. Petersburg, which, with two volumes of his private letters, are also at Blickling, in the possession of Constance, Marchioness of Lothian. But the newly found papers, which were not known to the Commission, make so important an addition to the Despatches, which have perhaps an unusual share of diplomatic reticence and formality, that it was felt a full publication of the whole might now be of value.¹

The connection of the Hobart family with Blickling dates from 1606, when the ancient home of the Boleyns, then in possession of Sir Edward Clere, their representative in the female line, was bought by Sir Henry Hobart, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas to King James I.

This great lawyer, in whom were united, says a contemporary notice of him, 'an excellent eloquence, the *éclat* of ancestry, the acutest abilities, the most engaging sweetness associated with a

¹ The Papers referred to which are included in this edition are published at the instance of Lady Lothian, and with every assistance from her.

singular gravity,'¹ was the father of sixteen children, and thus did not fail to found a family whose branches have spread widely. Blickling was rebuilt by him after the noble fashion of those times, and has remained to this day in the possession of his descendants.²

During the constitutional struggle of the seventeenth century the Hobarts were as a family on the popular side. The son and grandson next in succession to the Lord Chief Justice were Commissioners at Norwich to carry out the ordinance for ejecting 'scandalous and ignorant ministers, and for sequestrating the estates of Papists and notorious malignants in the county of Norfolk.'³ The fourth Baronet, Sir Henry, declared in favour of the Revolution which dethroned James II., and fought for William of Orange at the battle of the Boyne. His son, Sir John, supported the Hanoverian dynasty, and was created Lord Hobart and Earl of Buckinghamshire; while his daughter, Henrietta, having married Henry Howard, afterwards Earl of Suffolk, was, with her husband, among those who attached themselves to the Electoral Court during the lifetime of the Electress Sophia. It was at Marble Hill, the house of Lady Suffolk (the friend of Swift and Pope, of Horace Walpole and the Grenvilles), that her nephew, John, second Earl of Buckinghamshire, having early lost his mother, spent the greater part of his youth, and his accession to the Whig interest was thus assured both by tradition and connection. Under George II. he became a Privy Councillor, and held successively the posts of Comptroller of the King's Household and Lord of the Bedchamber; and when George Grenville was Secretary of State in the Ministry

¹ See Judge Jenkins's *Characters of Lord Coke and Lord Chief Justice Hobart*. Add. MS. 22,629, f. 225, British Museum.

² The second Earl of Buckinghamshire was the last of his descendants in the male line to own Blickling. The present owner is the representative of those of the second Earl's eldest daughter.

³ See Husband's *Collections from March 1642-December 1646*, p. 13.

of Lord Bute, Lord Buckinghamshire was appointed on July 17, 1762, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Court of St. Petersburg. The main object of his mission was to conclude an alliance with Russia; and his own comments, in later years, upon his failure to do this are not without interest:

‘If the old connection,’ he wrote in 1780,¹ ‘between the House of Austria and the Court of St. Petersburg could be renewed, and England, as formerly, stood the bond of that connection, the adventitious strength which Russia has obtained since the accession of the present Empress would enable such a union completely to check the restless ambition of France, backed by the insidious enmity of Frederic II. The idea of Russia never offers itself without my lamenting the economy of the English Treasury during the year 1764, as it rendered ineffectual a negotiation which, most honourable to me, would have proved materially useful to my country. It could not, indeed, but have given a different cast to every political transaction on which England since that time has been engaged.’

Lord Buckinghamshire’s social success at St. Petersburg was sufficiently marked to induce Lord Shelburne on his return to offer him in October, 1766, the Embassy to Madrid, then a post of great importance. But he had so completely identified himself with the policy of George Grenville, of whom he was a warm personal friend, that he was not disposed to accept office under the Government which had superseded him, and the offer was at once refused.² In the following November he was among those Peers who supported Lord Temple and George Grenville’s opposition to the dispensing and suspending prerogative of the Crown, which had been recently exercised on the occasion of the Bread Riots, when, Parliament having been prorogued very shortly before that time of stress, the King had by an Order in Council laid an embargo on the further

¹ To Lord George Germaine, July 8, 1780.

² Lord Buckinghamshire to George Grenville, October 9, 1766. *Buckinghamshire Papers*.