

**CHARTERS AND WRITS
CONCERNING THE
ROYAL BURGH OF
HADDINGTON 1318-1543**

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Charters and Writs Concerning the Royal Burgh of Haddington 1318-1543 by J. G. Wallace-James

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J. G. WALLACE-JAMES

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1318 - 1543

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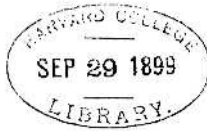
ROYAL BURGH OF HADDINGTON

1318 -- 1543

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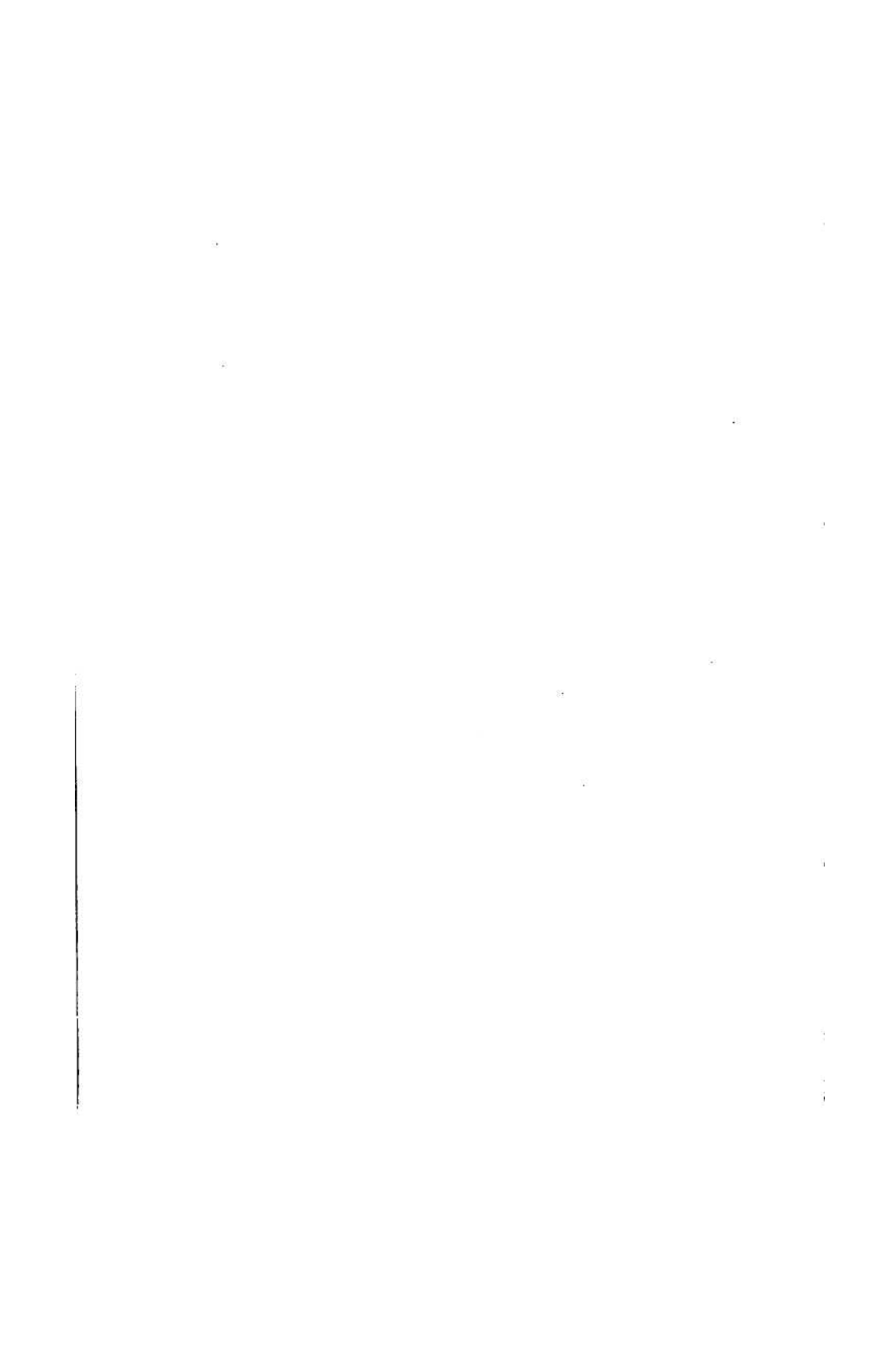
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PREFACE.

The following Deeds are all, with the exceptions noted, preserved in the Charter Room of the Royal Burgh of Haddington. In spite of the various vicissitudes that the Burgh has suffered from its "auld ynemies of England," these Deeds have been kept in perfect preservation. During the occupation of the Burgh by the English, when besieged by the Scots and their French auxiliaries, the "evidentis" were taken and held to ransom, as, in the few Treasurer's account books that still remain of the sixteenth century, similar entries to the following occur :—

"Item, to Robert Maitland for agayne
gettin of ye hail evidentis pertening to ye
towne furcht of ye Inglismannis handis of
yeirly pension during his lyfytyme, viii.
Merkis."

The Seals, unfortunately, have not fared so well, a small part of the centre of Robert the Bruce's Seal only remaining. The Seals attached to the Charter of Robert II., and to the letter of James III. are in an even more fragmentary state. The other Royal Seals are totally destroyed.

The Indenture between the Burgh and Maitland of Lethington is of interest, as it bears the signature of Richard Maitland, the poet. Sir Richard not only wrote poetry in his old age, but it is to him that we owe what we know of the poetry of Scotland before his time. The old blind statesman dictating his poetry to his daughter, Margaret, forms a pathetic picture—

"Heir Lethington, the statisman, courts the nyne,
Draps politticks a quhye and turns divyne,
Sings the Creation, and fair Eden tint,
And promise made to man, man durst not hint."

The Seal attached is broken; the legend is indistinct, but the shield bears the Lion Rampant of Maitland. The corresponding part of the Indenture was destroyed, along with many

VI.

other Maitland Writs, during the troubles in the seventeenth century. The Writs, in three iron chests, were for safety, after the Battle of Dunbar, hidden underground in the courtyard of Balcarras Castle. When more settled times arrived, after the restoration of Charles II., the chests were dug up, but it was found that "the same (Writs) have been totallie spoiled and losed be under-water coming in throw the loyning and seems of the saidis chests."

The following, from the Burgh Books, refers to the Charter by James V. :-

"Feb. 1542.—John Crumme to get a pension of 20 lib for life for getting a Greit Charter from King James V. for the brugh."

The Burgh of Haddington may be regarded as rich in records in spite of its proximity to the English Border and its position directly on the line of march between the South and Edinburgh. The more recent Deeds may be afterwards dealt with.

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