

**LETTERS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH AND KING
JAMES VI. OF SCOTLAND; SOME OF THEM
PRINTED FROM ORIGINALS IN THE
POSSESSION OF THE REV. EDWARD RYDER,
AND OTHERS FROM A MS. WHICH FORMERLY
BELONGED TO SIR PETER THOMPSON, KT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649094790

Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI. of Scotland; some of them printed from originals in the possession of the Rev. Edward Ryder, and others from a ms. which formerly belonged to Sir Peter Thompson, kt by Queen of England Elizabeth & King of England James VI & John Bruce

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KING OF ENGLAND JAMES VI & JOHN BRUCE**

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EDITED BY
JOHN BRUCE, ESQ. TREAS. S. A.



PRINTED FOR THE CAMDEN SOCIETY.

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LONDON:
J. R. NICOLS AND SON, PRINTERS,
PARLIAMENT STREET.

[NO. XLVI.]



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INTRODUCTION.

THE letters printed in the present volume have been derived from two sources. Forty-three of them have been communicated to the Camden Society by the rev. Edward Ryder, rector of Oaksey, in the county of Wilts: and the remaining fifty-two have been printed from a volume of transcripts formerly in the library of sir Peter Thompson, and now the property of the Camden Society by purchase from James Orclaw Halliwell, esq.

Of the letters for which we are indebted to Mr. Ryder, thirty-two are originals written wholly by the hand of queen Elizabeth; six are originals of an official character written by a secretary but signed by queen Elizabeth; two are contemporary copies of letters of king James, and two are drafts or copies in his majesty's hand-writing.

In what manner so large a collection of royal letters found their way into the possession of Mr. Ryder is partly accounted for as follows:

At the period to which these letters relate it was the custom for royal secretaries, and also for many other public functionaries, to treat as their own all papers relating to that portion of the public business which they were officially called upon to transact. A royal servant who advised the sovereign respecting a reply to a written communication generally retained afterwards, in his own possession, the communication which had been answered and the draft or copy

of the reply. And when he retired from office, he took away those papers with him. He looked upon them as his vouchers and evidences, the proofs and justifications of his public conduct. He deemed them as much his own as the title deeds of his private estate. It is in this way that so many collections of what are now more properly considered to be public documents came to be scattered over the country in the mansion rooms of noble families. In this way, also, and in consequence of the changes to which all families are subject, numbers beyond number of such papers have been totally lost. As soon as the persons who were primarily interested in these papers had passed away, the necessity for their preservation became less apparent. Damp and vermin laid siege to them; fire destroyed masses incalculable; and when changes of fortune or of residence rendered it imperative that such collections should be got rid of, they were either consigned to most ignoble uses, or divided and scattered, here and there, in foreign countries, or in the most unlikely nooks and corners of our own, and were thus again subjected to a multiplication of the same chances as before. Antiquaries soon became alive to the evils which necessarily resulted from such a state of things; and it was by the purchase of such papers from careless or needy possessors that sir Robert Cotton, the earl of Oxford, lord Shelburne, and other eminent persons of similar tastes, were enabled to get together the vast collections of state papers which exist in their manuscript libraries.

Many of the letters now communicated by Mr. Ryder bear obvious marks of having passed through the hands of official persons. Written on the backs of some of them are memoranda of what may be supposed to be the dry citius of date or receipt (pp. 39, 41, 49, 51). On others the indorsement states not only the day but also the

mode of the receipt, as at p. 45, "Received 8th February, 1586, by a post;" at p. 67, "1591, 3 November. Delivered by Mr. Bowes;" at p. 70, "Delivered by Roger Ashton, 28th January, 1591;" at p. 75, "K. Scotland. 1592, presented by Mr. Bowes, 3 Junij.;" and p. 80, "Delivered by the lord Borough, the 16th of March, 1593." But the indorsements which are most to our purpose occur at p. 25, "Copy of the king his letter to [the] queen of England, 20 December, 1685," and at p. 93, "Sent to me to be presented to his majestie at Thirlestane, 19th October, 1593."

These indorsements may be taken to indicate, in the case of the letters of queen Elizabeth, that, after they had been presented to king James, and, in the case of the copies of James's letters, that, after their tenor had been determined upon with his majesty, they were retained by some official person, or by some succession of official persons, according to the custom to which I have referred; and the mention of "Thirlestane" directs our attention to a family in which such papers were very likely to be found.

The house that "stands on Leader side" needs no introduction to our Scottish readers; but it may not be superfluous to remind the English members of the Camden Society, that Thirlestane is a chief seat of the Maitlands, an ancient family eminently conspicuous in the history of Scotland during the period to which these papers relate, and not less so in the history of England as well as of Scotland, during the subsequent Stewart reigns.

Sir Richard Maitland, of Lettington and Thirlestane, was appointed one of the extraordinary lords of session in 1554, and one of the ordinary lords in 1561. He also held the office of keeper of the privy seal from 1562 to 1567. In the latter year he became totally blind. In spite of that infirmity he continued to execute his office