

Original Documents.

LETTER FROM QUEEN ELIZABETH TO THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER, IN BEHALF OF CAMDEN.
COMMUNICATED BY MR. JOSEPH BURTT.

THE following draft of a letter, or mandate, from Queen Elizabeth, has recently been discovered amongst documents preserved in the Chapter House, Westminster, and is communicated by Mr. Burtt. It cannot fail to be acceptable to our readers, on account of the interest which it possesses as connected with the father of British topography, and a name which every archaeologist in our country must reverence. This letter, and the circumstances relating to the precise period or emergency in Camden's life, which called forth such a requisition in his favour from the Crown, appear to have escaped the researches of his biographers. We must leave the illustration of these particulars to the future investigation of those who are conversant with the history of the times of Elizabeth, and of their learned annalist, whose welfare appears in this curious document to have been a matter of such concern to his royal mistress.

The tone in which the following letter is expressed will strike the reader as a singular mixture of the request and the command. It must, however, be borne in mind that the dignitary to whom this injunction was addressed was the warm friend and patron of Camden; as also, that, at the date of this letter, Camden had recently succeeded to the honourable post of Head Master of Westminster School, having previously, by the interest of his friend, Dr. Goodman, the Dean of Westminster, been preferred to that of Second Master in the same establishment. That kind patron might, doubtless, have freely conceded to him the hospitalities required by the Crown on his behalf; but some special service rendered by Camden seems to have moved Elizabeth to require that the grant should appear to proceed directly from herself. We have yet to learn what was the precise nature of the good service in which the labours and study of Camden had proved useful to Elizabeth. His health had greatly suffered from a tedious ague, by which he had been attacked, two years previously. In the year when this document is dated, he was enabled to produce an enlarged edition, the fourth, of his "Britannia." Possibly, it might be through researches for this important undertaking, patronised by Burleigh, that he had found occasion to gratify the Queen; or, the future services which Elizabeth had in view, requiring liberty and freedom of mind, might perhaps concern an intention of assigning to his care the annals of her reign, to which, not many years subsequently, he addressed himself in earnest, at Burleigh's instance and command. Whatever were the cause, there can be little doubt that to the influence of his noble patron, the Lord Treasurer, was due the favour herein intended towards Camden by Elizabeth.

The practice of granting corrodies had become very prevalent in monastic establishments prior to the Reformation, and frequently caused a heavy

burden, little in accordance with the original intention of the founders. We have not at present been able to point out any similar example of a grant by "way of pension or corrody," in Protestant times, conceded at the instance of the patron or founder in any Church establishment or royal foundation. The ancient "King's School," connected from early times with the Monastery of Westminster, had been founded and endowed anew by Elizabeth, in 1560, as a nursery for religion and orthodox literature; and it is not easy to understand why the royal bounty could not be sufficiently extended to Camden, the Head Master of that Institution, without rendering him a pensioner at the table of his friend and neighbour, at the Deanery.

The requisition, for which we are indebted to the kindness of Mr. Burt, is conveyed in the following terms:—

Trustie & welbeloved. Wheare we have of late used in some service [*word erased*] William Cambden Scholemaster there in such thing whereof by his travayle & study he hath attained the skill *w^{ch} he¹* so much to o^r goodliking and contentment as we may have occasion hereafter to employ him in the like wh^{ch} to thend he may be [bothe the] redyer and better encouraged to attend we have bethought o^rselfe y^t it were fitt he were settled in some place where he might be *both* neer to o^r calle & commadement & freed from [somewhat eased of] the care of living so as he *might* may wth more liberty & freedome of mynde intend to such services as may be layd uppon him [*And* uppon consideration whereof] We have fond no place more meet for aunswerable to this o^r means then y^t o^r Church of Westminster, where we have therefore thought good to place him & to require you *the* that uppon the receipt of these o^r lres he may be admitted to have his dyett & food [for himselfe] at the table of you the Dean [& Prebends] & for one servant among yo^r servants so to continew during his life, w^{ch} being no great breden to the Church & a matter tending to gratefy us [wthall well deserved off [at o^r hands by the] *is in the* long tyme & paynes he hath alredy sved there in teaching] we doe not doubt but you will easely condescend unto [& suffer him to enjoy. Notwthstanding] *And doe require you* for his better assurance thereof & o^r satisfaction we doe require [you] to make a graunt thereof to him by writing under the Chapter seale as by way of pension or corrody [to be holden] during his lyfe. And the same to send unto us to be delivered from us to him as a token of some part of y^e gratuity y^t we mean towardes him. And we shall take it in thankfull part at yo^r handes.

To y^e Dean of Westm^r.

4 April 1594

for Mr Cambden.

¹ In printing this document, the words given in *Italic* are erasures in the original; the words bracketed are those supplied in the MS. as interlinear corrections or additions.