

Original Unpublished Letter

FROM KING JAMES I.

TO

SIR ROBERT CECIL, EARL OF SALISBURY.

COMMUNICATED BY

DAWSON TURNER, ESQ., V.P.

THE same abundant source of curious manuscript matter, which enabled me contribute to our Society the Letters from Oliver Cromwell and Sir Isaac Newton, has likewise supplied the following, in itself not otherwise than interesting. So numerous are those that have already appeared in print, from the pen of this prince, who was an unwearied scribbler, that I should have hesitated in producing the present as new to the public, had I not been supported by the highest authority—our very valuable honorary member, Sir Henry Ellis. Of such a composition it hardly requires to be stated, that the original is wholly in the hand-writing of the monarch, of whose signature I have annexed a fac-simile, as also of the direction on the cover. The quaint peculiarity of the latter, and not less so of the commencement within, might well have been regarded as an enigma difficult of solution, were it not that there are in existence other letters from the King, known to have been addressed to the Earl of Salisbury, and beginning in the same words. Such had probably been seen by Horace Walpole, who, after designating this nobleman as one who “had the fortune, or misfortune, to please both Queen Elizabeth and James the First, who, like the son of the Duke of Lerma, had the uncommon fate of succeeding his own father

as prime minister, but who, unlike him, did not supplant his parent,"* goes on expressly to tell us, "King James gave him the familiar appellation of his *Little Beagle*, it is presumed, from his unshapely figure, and from the intelligence which he was enabled to procure by means of the secret agents he employed at the different courts of Europe." A still stronger proof that Lord Salisbury was the individual thus styled, is contained in the particulars of the "Expensis of the Doges passand to Denmark, &c.," printed in the third volume of the *Miscellanies of the Maitland Club*, p. 340.† We there read—"curious illustrations of the partiality of all James's family for buck-hunting, the pastime which he so anxiously followed, and instances of the metaphor with which the Queen termed one noble courtier, *my kind dog*, and the King addressed another as *my littill beagill*, will be found in the very interesting letters presented to the Maitland Club by Sir Patrick Walker, and printed by them, 1835."‡

With testimony less decided and unequivocal before him, the reader would probably have been disposed with myself to fancy, that the individual to whom the King gives so playfully endearing a soubriquet, to whom he writes in such familiar terms, whose letters might only be delivered to him "when he was all alone in his chamber," and whom he hopes to see, when he "shall have come back to his chimney-corner again to hunt a mouse, having so much mind of large hounds in that rainy deep weather, as to have forgotten all beagles," could not but have been of the opposite sex, and was probably one that he did not care distinctly to name, or even more pointedly to allude to. In saying this, it is only jus-

* *Royal and Noble Authors*, Park's edition, II., p. 38.

† This article is more intelligibly headed in the work, as "Account of the Expensis of certain Dogs sent to the King of Denmark, and of Requests by King James VI. to the Earl of Mar for *Terrieres* or *Earth-Dogs*."

‡ To this volume, I am sorry to say, I have no means of reference; but I know, from the late lamented Secretary of the Society, Dr. Smith, that it was Lord Salisbury, who was here also thus called.

tice to state, that, much as has been published touching the Monarch's character, and various and conflicting as are the opinions it has given rise to, I am not aware that an imputation of the kind was ever cast upon it. Not unfrequently did it happen that the royal ears were tickled with the sounds most acceptable to them, when he was hailed the Solomon of his age; an epithet bestowed upon him, indeed, in the spirit of sarcasm by his contemporary Henri Quatre, but in the most entire sincerity by many of his British subjects. By none, probably, was it more strongly, and, I may be allowed to say, by none more absurdly, if not more impiously, than by Dr. Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, when, on the 7th of May, 1625, he preached at Westminster Abbey his Funeral Sermon on the death of the King.* In this long discourse, replete with theological and classical learning, the prelate, who was also Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, carefully analyses the leading traits of the mind and conduct of his late royal master, traces the particulars of both from first to last—"from fruitful A to unproductive Z"—and compares them, generally and individually, with those of the wise King of Israel. Nor, while lavish in his eulogies upon the deceased, does he entirely forget the duty he owes to the reigning monarch; for he terminates his sermon in the following words, "I will, therefore, conclude these exequies of Solomon with a saying spoken by that imitator of Solomon, '*Mortuus est pater, et quasi non est mortuus; similem enim reliquit sibi post se,*' whom God long prosper." On the other hand, there have not been wanting those—and not small is the number—who have nicknamed James the pedant Sovereign, and have held his writings and actions in great contempt; uniting their

* See *Lord Somers' Tracts*, published by Sir Walter Scott, II., p. 93. The editor subjoins, in a note, "This Sermon, now for the first time inserted in the collection, merits preservation, both as a curious specimen of the eloquence of the times, and of the talents of an eminent statesman, divine, patriot, and linguist."

suffrages to that of the Lord of Strawberry Hill, who, in the work above quoted, does not scruple to say, "quotations, puns, Scripture, witticisms, superstition, oaths, vanity, prerogative, and pedantry, are the ingredients of all his sacred Majesty's performances, and were the pure produce of his own capacity, and deserving all the incense offered to such immense erudition by the divines of his age and the flatterers of his court." In which of these two opinions the greater justice lies, the Norfolk Archæological Society may possibly be enabled to arrive at some conclusion, from the letter here submitted to them. For myself, I will only add, that it is in an entirely perfect state, even to the two small seals, and portions of the silk with which it was fastened according to the fashion of the age; and that the engraving upon these seals—the arms of France and England, quarterly—shows it to have been written after the Scottish Monarch came to the English throne; but in what particular year there are no means of now determining.

D. T.

MY LITTILL BEAGILL,

Nou that the maister falconnaire doth returne, I cannot but accompanie him with these few lynes, althoch indeid I micht uerrie euill haue spaired him at this tyme, as well for rewling of the haulkis, as for being so fitte a man for trying of oure houndis: yett since he will needes be gone, I praye you let him be salutid with a goode pype of tobacco; and I praye you putte out him of his new custome, quhiche is to drinke nothing but aile after supper. Suirlie ye made a braue choice of him, for presenting your cyphred letters unto me, for he himself can wryte nothing but cyphres; but in goode faith he hadde almost putte me in a fraye at the resaite of thaim, for he came uerrie

grandie unto me quhill I uas sitting at supper, and quhis-
perid in my eare uerrie quyettie that he hadde letters from
you unto me, but he durst not giue me thaim till I waire
all alone in my chamber, and left me to gesse quhat kynde of
maitter it coulde be; but I praye you comende me hairtely
to goode maister intelligencer, and wishe him to be plaine in
two things: first, quhat moued him to enuye my doing ho-
noure to my poore younge babie Chairles; and next, quhat
ayles him at Skotland: for in treuth I know not quhat he
can meane by querreling thaire continuance in thaire forme of
gouuernement; but it is well ye haue him nou to be *Ædipus*
of his owin riddles. And thus praying you to comende me to
the tuo mentioned in my former letre, not omitting all the
rest of youre honest societie, I bidde you hairtelie fairuell,
hauing now so muche mynde of goode large houndis in this
rainie deepe uether, as I have forgotten all beagills till I come
bakke to the chimney corner againe, to hunte a mouse.

James P.

To my weill wiffe waffe.

