II.

LETTER OF SAFE CONDUCT AND RECOMMENDATION GRANTED BY
JAMES II., KING OF SCOTS, TO NICHOLAS GEORGIADES, A GREEK OF
ARCOSSON, TRAVELLING THROUGH SCOTLAND TO COLLECT THE ALMS
OF THE FAITHFUL FOR THE RANSOM OF HIS BROTHER, TAKEN PRI-
SONER BY THE TURKS AT THE CAPTURE OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1453.
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The document which I lay before the Society may serve in some slight mea-
sure to enable us to recall the feelings which were excited even on the farthest
frontiers of Europe by the fall of the capital of the Eastern Empire.¹ Six years
after that memorable event, a Greek, who had lost his all in the siege, and left
his brother captive in the hands of the Mahometan conquerors, makes his way,
maimed of a limb, to the Scottish shore. He bears a letter from the Cardinal of
Jerusalem, and on the faith of this token, and moved also by the wanderer’s story,
as told by his own lips, the Scottish King, James the Second, issues a letter,
under the Great Seal, taking the goods, person, and servants of the exile into
his especial protection, and recommending the lieges and subjects of Scotland
to give their help and favour to the Greek in the pious object of his mission—
the gathering, from Christian charity, of a sum sufficient to ransom his brother
from the power of “those enemies of the cross of Christ, the execrable Turks.”

"[Jacobus Dei] gracia Rex Scotoruin vninerus et singulis prelatis baronibus
ceterifique officiaris regni [fui ad qu]uos presentes litere peruenerint faiutem Nuper
relacione Nicholai Georgei de Arcoffon [conce]pimus qualiter in capcione vrbis
Constantinopolitane omnia bona fua amifit et frater eiufdem per inimicos crucis
Cristi Turcos nephandiffimos captus extiterat et ad redempconem postus
prout etiam ex literis reuerendiffimini in Crifto patris Dominici titulo Sanfte Cru-

¹ After the lapse of half a century, the lamentation for the loss of Constantinople was still
yearly renewed in the services of the Scottish Church:—"Verum nostre salutis anno quin-
quagesimo seando supra millesimum et quadringentesimum, Constantinopolis cliuitos
orientis columnem et vnicum gracie domelicium a Machameto Turcorum princepe et suiis
inflibibus per quinquaginta dies obsessa et expugnata, dirutaque et fedata, destructis in eadem
tempis, ari, et castris in Omnippetis Dei honore quam mirifce preparatis; Christian-
isque nece et morte turpissima et seuisius expositis; sanctorum mirum in modum reliquis
et pedibus in turpitudinem conulcatis."—(Breviarium Aberdonense, prop. SS. pro temp.
hyem., fol. lxxxvii.)
How Nicholas Georgiades sped in his undertaking, or what money he carried away with him from Scotland, are matters of which I find no record. At some time between the end of June 1458 and the beginning of July 1459, a sum of four pounds was paid, by the King's command, to a certain Greek and a certain German. Both are left nameless in the roll of account, so that we are without the means of determining if the former was the person to whom the King had granted a letter of safe conduct and recommendation in April 1459. We know that he was not the only wreck of the Byzantine Empire wafted to the distant coast of Scotland; for between the middle of July 1459 and the middle of June 1460, King James the Second commanded a sum of fifteen pounds to be divided between "two knights of Greece,"—warriors (it may be allowed us to conjecture) whom the triumphs of the Crescent had left without a home or a country.

The same source which supplies these scanty notices affords some information also as to the amount which, half a century afterwards, was demanded by the Turk for the ransom of a Scottish gentleman. A younger son of the house of Hume of Fast Castle, whom the love of adventure or the spirit of devotion conducted to the East, had risen to distinction in the service of the Mameluke Sultan at Cairo, when tidings reached him that, one after another, eight of his kinsmen had died, leaving him the nearest heir of the gloomy fortress and wild

1 Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum, lib. v., no. 117. (MS., Gen. Regist. House, Edinb.)
domain of their race. His wish to return was shared, if it had not been anticipated, in Scotland; and seven and forty sacks of the wool of the Lammermoors, each sack weighing about 640 pounds troy, were shipped by the father at Leith, to be exchanged in England, or on the Continent, for gold to pay the ransom of the son. The price at which the bales were sold does not appear; but it cannot have been inconsiderable, since even the customs-duty on their export, amounted to sixty-two pounds, thirteen shillings, and fourpence. This sum was remitted by King James the Fourth, out of regard to the object of the sale. In no long time afterwards—but too late to see his father alive—the heir of Fast Castle arrived in Scotland, in the train of that young Archbishop of St Andrews along with whom he was fated so soon to fall at Flodden. If we knew more of the private life of our forefathers in that age, we should perhaps discover that such foreign travels as those of Cuthbert Hume were less unfrequent among his countrymen than is now commonly supposed. I observe, that the same year which saw his return to Scotland from the banks of the Nile, beheld a bailie of Peebles departing on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.