

## 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 PRISONER BY THE TURKS AT THE CAPTURE OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1453. BY JOSEPH ROBERTSON, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The document which I lay before the Society may serve in some slight measure 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.”

*Litera Greci cum pede ligneo.*

“[Jacobus Dei] gracia Rex Scotorum vniveris et fingulis prelatis baronibus ceterisque officariis regni [sui ad q]uos presentes litere peruenerint salutem Nuper relacione Nicholai Georgei de Arcosson [conce]pimus qualiter in capcione vrbis Constantinopolitane omnia bona sua amisit et frater eiusdem per inimicos crucis Crifiti Turcos nephandiffimos captus extiterat et ad redempcionem positus prout etiam ex literis reuerendiffimini in Crifto patris Dominici titulo Sancte Cru-

<sup>1</sup> 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 quinquagesimo secundo supra millesimum et quadringentesimum, Constantinopolis ciuitas tocius orientis columen et vnicum gracie domicilium a Machameto Turcorum principe et suis infidelibus per quinquaginta dies obsessa et expugnata, dirutaque et fedata, destructis in eadem templis, aris, et castris in Omnipotentis Dei honore quam mirifice preparatis; Christianisque nece et morte turpissima et seuissima expositis; sanctorum mirum in modum reliquiis et pedibus in turpitudinem conculcatis.”—(*Breviarium Aberdonense*, prop. SS. pro temp. hyem., fol. lxxxvii.)

cis in Jherusalem presbiteri Cardinalis intelleximus Verum quia dictus Nicolaus propter bonorum inopiam dictam redemptionem facere nequit nisi sibi Crifiti fidelibus succuratur Nos igitur eidem Nicholai infortuniis compacientes ipsum ad regnum nostrum diuertendo et ibidem morando pro caritativo subsidio a populo regni nostri colligendo [et] exinde ad propria redeundo necnon res et bona sua quecunque in protectionem et defensionem nostras speciales suscipimus per presentes strictius inhibentes ne quis sibi malum molestiam iniuriam [fe]u grauamen in suis rebus seruitoribus aut bonis inferat seu inferre permittat quoquomodo [quin]ymmo vos ligii et subditi nostri eidem in dictis elemofinis colligendis assistenciam et fauorem [im]pendatis Et si quid ei iniuriatum fuerit sine dilacione debite reformari faciatis Datum sub magno sigillo nostro apud Edinburgh xx<sup>mo</sup> die mensis Aprilis anno Domini m<sup>o</sup> cccc<sup>o</sup> quinquagesimonono Et regni nostri vicefimo tercio.”<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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,”<sup>3</sup>—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

<sup>1</sup> Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Sctorum, lib. v., no. 117. (MS., Gen. Regist. House, Edinb.)

<sup>2</sup> Computum Custumariorum burgi de Striueling, 22. Junii, 1458.—6. Julii, 1459. (Rotuli Seaccarii Regum Sctorum, no. 230. MS., Gen. Regist. House, Edinb.)

<sup>3</sup> Computum Custumariorum burgi de Edinburgh, 16. Julii 1459.—19. Junii 1460. (Rotuli Seaccarii Regum Sctorum, no. 232).

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>