

II.

A LETTER TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN FROM MONSIGNORE CARLO ERSKINE, DOMESTIC PRELATE TO POPE PIUS VI., WITH NOTICES OF PAPAL BULLS ISSUED TO SCOTLAND. COMMUNICATED BY COSMO INNES, ESQ., ADVOCATE. F.S.A.Sc.

ROME, *June 6th*, 1785.

“ MY LORD,

“ I am quite ashamed, on having delayed so long to give an answer to the letter with which your Lordship was pleased to honour me in the last year. Although I may have wherewith to excuse my silence; yet, I must confess, it is quite out of my power to justify it: nevertheless, I will venture to produce what may in some measure apologize for my fault; relying for the rest on your humanity and good nature.

“ When I received your Lordship's letter, I was sized with a weakness in my eyes, to which I have been subject for some years past, during the heat of summer, which almost entirely hinders me from reading or writing. In that situation, although I attempted it several times, yet I was obliged at last, to give over the thought of answering your Lordship's letter, for that season; especially in a language, to which not being used, it required some better application: for although you was so kind, as to put it in my option, to write to you either in Italian or Latin, I looked upon it as disgraceful for me, considering myself as Scotch, to make use of any other language, but that of our country. Being obliged on the said account, to put off writing to your Lordship, I thought to make some atonement for it, by exerting myself in the meantime, in preparing those measures which might forward your researches; that in the end I might show, that if I had been silent I had not been idle. To that purpose, I addressed myself to the keeper and clerks of the Vatican library; but as I could have no satisfactory answer from them, I applied next to the keeper of the Secret Archives, where all the old Bulls and letters, and other such papers are preserved; and as he flattered me with the hopes that such things might be found there, as myght prove usefull, providing I could obtain a leave from the Pope for the extraction of such notices as I should require, I made my petition to his Holiness, by whom it was graciously granted. You may easily see my Lord, that the bringing about this work with different persons, and the waiting for the proper opportunity to speak to the Sovereigne, took up more time than I had imagined at the beginning: but as I had gone so far, and was fixed on the scheme of accounting in some measure for my dilation; I still expected, until I

should be favoured by the gentleman keeper, who being occupied about the publication of some work, could not comply with my demands neither so soon nor so fully as I desired. At last I received from him the enclosed note ; but another unexpected accident retarded my furthering it to you. Mr Gavin Hamilton, who had been long thinking of returning to his native country, being at last resolved to undertake that journey in the beginning of the late spring, I thought of sending my letter by him ; but as it happens, having put it off from one week to another, he did not set off until some days past, and I don't know for what accident he forgot to acquaint me with the day of his departure. So that also on account of this unexpected combination, my letter set out some days later than it should. This is what I may say in my behalf. Unexpected circumstances, and perhaps a premature desire to show to your Lordship my will to serve you, have produced my fault, for which I beg your pardon.

“ Now, late indeed, but once at last, I render to you my Lord, and to all the gentlemen of the Society, my most humble thanks for the honour bestowed on me, by giving me a place in your learned Society. I am so much the more sensible at it, as it flatters me with the thought, that although so far removed, yet by this means, I have acquired a new connexion with the country from which I draw my origin. It must give to your Lordship a particular satisfaction to have been the promoter and founder of a Society so beneficial to Scotland ; which entitles you to the gratitude of all those that love their country ; and I am proud, that so generous an institution be owing to the patriotick spirit of a person to whom I have the honour to be related. As much as it depends on me, I shall leave nothing unattempted, by which I may be useful to the object on which our Society has been erected. To that purpose, I shall not cease to insist on the gentleman, the keeper of the archives ; and since the Pope was so gracious as to give leave to copy any papers I should ask for ; if your Lordship thought proper to write to H. H. a letter on that account, I believe it would be very well received by him, and if you would mention in it my connection with you, it would be honourable to me. Besides the note which I send enclosed, of such Bulls as have been found heatherto, the keeper has showed me a monument on parchment, of which, if you desire it, I may likewise send a copy. It is an oath of allegiance of John Baliol to King Edward the First. It begins by narrating, that on the death of King Alexander, several pretenders to the crown of Scotland appeared ; that they agreed that the question should be decided by Edward ; that he had declared for Baliol as next heir. To show his right, there is a kind of genealogical tree from Alexander the First down to him : then it is said, that Baliol had attempted to revolt from Edward, contrary to the oath taken at his election, and now apprized of his fault, he renews his

oath of allegiance, which is set down *per extenso*. This is a part of history well known; but if your Lordship should choose to have a copy of the said paper, I can further it to you. In the meantime, other researches shall be made: and I hope they shall not be useless. In order to draw more the keeper in our interest, I think it would not be improper to make him an honorary member of the society. His name is *Abbate Gaetano Marini, Prefetto dell' Archivio Segreto Vaticano*. As to the collection of Bulls you have mentioned to me, there is such a thing, but I do not think it worth purchasing for the Society since it could draw no advantage from it, for its interest. In the Vatican Library, perhaps, something might be found; but in that unsafe chaos, to which the keepers themselves are strangers, it will be a mere accident if anything be hit upon; and I doubt very much if Assemanni could ever have been able to fulfil what he promised. Nevertheless, I shall use all my endeavours, that proper researches may be done there.

“By Mr Gavin Hamilton you will receive my portrait, which I had sent to him beforehand. It will gain an additional merit to the original, to have it placed in so good company as you hinted to me. The names of Mr Henry and Mr Thomas Erskine had already reached to this town by the public papers; and by several of my acquaintances here, it had been reflected on the singularity of three persons of the same name, being in the same profession at the same time, in three so distant countries. But your brothers, my Lord, have a more ample, and more luminous scene where to exert themselves, and talent more apt to fill it. I must be satisfied, that born at a distance from the country of my fathers, if I have added no lustre, I have at least done no disgrace to our family. This is the aim, which I proposed to myself from the beginning, and although deprived of many subsidies, I hope I have attained to it. As to Mr David Erskine I was always of your Lordship's opinion: but I have heard since that he is gone to the East Indies. I thank you for the account you was so kind to give me as to my other relations, and am glad they have begun to repair the losses sustained by our family at other times. But, my Lord, must I despair of ever seeing you or your worthy brother in this country? I daresay, that you would find in Italy, and especially in Rome, many things not unworthy the trouble of a journey; and it should be the greatest happiness I could ever enjoy in my life, to be here for sometime in your company. In the meantime, if it were not too much liberty for one portrait to ask three, I should be very happy to have in my possession the portraits of persons that I so much admire.

“Mr John Geddes, by whom I received your letter, will be the deliverer of this. I heard from him with pleasure the regard which your Lordship has for him, who well deserves it. I have been very happy with his acquaintance

and company in my younger years; and have always had a particular esteem for his virtues and merit.

“I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect,

“ My Lord,

“ Your most obedient, and most humble Servant
and Kinsman,

“ CHARLES ERSKINE.”

List of Papal Bulls issued to Scotland between the years 1216 and 1261.

BOLLE DI ONORIO III., che assolvono il Vescovo Glasguense, e Maestro Gervasio di Obrèg, i quali ne tempi delle turbolenze Scozzesi, e Inglesi aveano fatte assai cose contro la Chiesa Romana.

Bolle al Rè Alessandro, e a suoi successori, colle quali gli accorda ONORIO molti privilegj, riceve sotto la protezione Apostolica i Vescovadi, che numera ad imitazione di somiglianti indulti accordati ai Rè di Scozia da' PAPI CELESTINO, ed INNOCENZO.

Altra Bolla ad esso, in cui è lodata grandemente la sua pietà per aver puniti i Parrochiani del Vescovo Catanense, i quali lo aveano ucciso, ed arso nella di lui cucina: La Bolla è diretta ai Vescovi Glasguense, Duncheldense, e Dublinense, [Dunblanense.]

Altra al medesimo, acciò non voglia congiurare contro il Rè d' Inghilterra, e la Chiesa Romana.

Altra, nella quale si parla di Guglielmo de Bosco Cancelliere di esso Rè.

BOLLE DI GREGORIO IX. al Rè, acciò osservi al Rè d' Inghilterra quella fedeltà, che gli avea giurata.

Altra, nella quale è ricordato il Nipote di quel Rè Riccardo de Tonis.

Altra con indulto al Vescovo Glasguense di non poter essere citato fuori del Regno.

Altra circa l'omaggio da doversi prestare dal Rè, e da Baroni del Regno al Rè d'Inghilterra.

BOLLE D' INNOCENZO IV. al Rè di Scozia, acciò possa usar carne e latte in tempo di Quaresima, sentito il medico, e il Confessore; e al Rè d'Inghilterra, le cui istanze del non doversi ungere il Rè di Scozia senza il suo assenso sono rigettate.

Altra a Margherita Regina per poter entrare ne' Monasteri delle Monache.

ALESSANDRO IV. conferma i Privilegj Apostolici al Rè, manda un Legato per esaminare la causa di Gamelino Vescovo di S. Andrea accusato dal Rè di alcuni delitti, per i quali pretendeva non dovesse esser consagrato, e rigetta l'istanza, che dovesse essere ritirata la provvista fatta della Chiesa Glasguense in persona di Giovanni de Chean Cappellano Apostolico.