

III.

A FRENCH MISSION TO SCOTLAND IN 1543. BY WILLIAM MOIR
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During the autumn of 1543 the political atmosphere in Scotland was in a highly disturbed condition. The Governor, the Earl of Arran, had suddenly abandoned his English policy, and joined the French party under the Queen Dowager and Cardinal Beaton. Consequently, Matthew, Earl of Lennox, who had been invited to Scotland on the definite understanding that he should replace his rival in the Governorship as the candidate of the French party, was left to reconsider his position in regard to the friends whose purposes he had served.

Until the 4th September 1543 Lennox was a good patriot, or, in the language of the day, a good "Frenchman," and "one of the rabble of the Kirkmen who would not agree that pledges be laid in England." During the next six months he was neither Frenchman nor Englishman, but a source of anxiety to both parties. In March 1544 it was reported that only fears for the safety of his brother, John Stuart of Aubigny, delayed his "affection" to the English King. The different phases of this metamorphosis may be studied in considerable detail in the papers which Jacques de la Brosse and Jacques Mesnaige carried back to France after their embassy to this country, as a record of the value of the oath, seal, and signature of this Earl of Lennox, the Queen Dowager, Cardinal Beaton, and Francis I, King of France. The principal documents in the register of this embassy (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, vols. 17,330, 17,888, 17,889, and 17,890) are:—A report on the affairs of Scotland by the ambassadors; two copies, fair draft drawn up 13th November 1543 and copy dated 24th November, signed and corrected; secret instructions by Francis I. to the ambassadors, 12th February 1544; various receipts, warrants, and minutes of meeting at Stirling; guarantee by the Earl of Lennox in favour of the Queen Dowager and Cardinal Beaton, 13th October 1543, signed and sealed

(seal now wanting); two agreements between the same parties, signed and dated 24th and 25th October, the latter being also signed by the ambassadors; letters by the Earl of Lennox and the ambassadors to Francis I., dated 9th and 10th October 1543, and by Francis I. to them, dated respectively 12th and 25th February 1544. At least four documents are wanting:—The original instructions of the ambassadors, 25th June 1543, and letters of appointment in favour of the Earl of Lennox; warrant to Jehan de Vymond, treasurer, for payment of 9400 crowns to the Scottish nobility, according to the scheme of division agreed upon and signed at Stirling, 25th October 1543; and the letter of the ambassadors to Francis I., 27th January 1544. The following is a chronological summary of the purport of this register.

On the 25th June 1543 the envoys received instructions at Marolles to proceed on a mission to Scotland, "to treat and accord with our allies or their deputies concerning the surety and corroboration of our ancient friendship and alliance" (Commission printed, Teulet, i. 123, 1862). On 6th October they landed at Dumbarton, where they were received by Lennox, to whom they handed letters from Francis I., appointing him his councillor in all that pertained to the disposal of the finances and stores which accompanied the embassy. In accordance with their instructions, they also transferred the treasure-chest containing 83,600 livres to Dumbarton Castle, which at that time was in Lennox's possession. On the 7th, or at least the 8th—too late to save the treasure—messengers arrived from the Queen Dowager, with directions that nothing should be disembarked within the territory of the Earl. In the absence (unexplained) of the ambassadors, these orders were communicated to the captains, who therefore landed the stores and ammunition in the Argyll country, and placed the ships in safety. At their meeting at Dumbarton, Lennox had furnished La Brosse and Mesnaige with his views on the political situation in Scotland, and alleged that he had been instrumental in effecting the release of the two Queens—the dowager and her infant daughter—and the Cardinal from the imprisonment to which they had been subjected by authority

of the Governor, Arran. In return for his services on their behalf, they—the Queen Dowager and the Cardinal—now consorted with the Governor and had cast him off, with the result that a considerable number of the nobility favoured his appointment as Governor, and were assembled at Edinburgh (6th October) for that very purpose. In brief, the kingdom was in a sad state owing to the divisions among the aristocracy. Nevertheless, he had won over to service of the King of France many of the nobility who formerly were “servants” of the English King. This description of the political situation, when compared with the later information brought from Stirling, doubtless caused the ambassadors to regret their precipitancy in disembarking the treasure. For the present, they attempted to allay the Earl’s resentment against the Queen Dowager on account of the orders transmitted to the captains, and persuaded him to consent to an interview with her at Stirling. On the journey thither, the French envoys met the English lords at Glasgow, and were requested to explain the nature of their mission, as well as to exhibit their commission. To this demand they returned an evasive answer, asserting that they were sent to favour the public welfare, and not to support any particular quarrel. At this point, the envoys remark on the unsettled condition of the country, and the bands of armed men to be seen; so that “not only is the nobility in arms, but the churchmen, the religious, and the peasants do not walk through the country save in large companies, and all armed with jacks, swords, buckler, and a half-pyke in hand, which is called in this country a lance.” At Stirling, they ascertained the full gravity of Lennox’s defection; while their efforts to procure a rupture of the English marriage by a lavish distribution of French crowns promised to be attended with little success, so long as the treasure remained in the Earl’s keeping. With a view to its recovery, they proposed that the hand of the infant Queen should be offered to him, in accordance with their instructions to secure her marriage with a native of the country “who was fit to govern the kingdom.” Lennox agreed to this proposal, and, on 13th October, granted a declaration under his seal and signature that, “in default of

the consent of the Estates, the consent of the said widow lady to the said marriage between the said Lady Queen and us is null and of no effect without need of any other declaration of nullity"; as also in regard to the consent of the Cardinal. Accordingly, on the 24th (in the absence of the Governor) the Queen Dowager, the Earl of Lennox, and the Cardinal agreed, "under forfeit of honour, wealth, and life," (1) that they would exert themselves to the utmost to marry the young Queen to a Scottish lord who could preserve the kingdom, and that no offer would induce them to consent to the English marriage; (2) that this triumvirate would act in accordance with the decision of its majority, and that its aim would be the confirmation of the Franco-Scottish alliance in the next Parliament; and (3) in consideration of the merits of the Earl as a ruler and administrator, and subject to his foregoing promise, the Queen Dowager consented to his marriage with the Queen, and promised to assist him by every means. Further, because the said Earl had promised to maintain the Catholic faith and the ceremonies of the Church, as well as the realm and the alliance confirmed by the late King, she gave her solemn promise to advance his estate, "as of him whom we hope to have as the future husband of the Queen our daughter." It was further arranged, verbally, that the treasure stored in Dumbarton Castle should be placed in the hands of the Queen Dowager; and that 4000 crowns should be given to the Cardinal, 2000 to the Earl of Lennox, 500 to Hume, and 300 to Seaforth and the Sieur de "Marcar" (Mercer), who had recently been engaged in irregular fighting on the border with some success. On the following day, Lennox resiled from this arrangement, and informed the envoys that he would not allow the treasure to be removed from Dumbarton Castle before the meeting of the Estates of Parliament, as it would secure to him many supporters in his endeavour to wrest the Governorship from his rival. "To avoid a greater inconvenience," it was then agreed that the treasure should remain in his keeping until Christmas, in consideration of his solemn obligation to hand it over to La Brosse and Mesnaige for distribution as agreed upon by the majority, provided it were stored in Glasgow.

At the same meeting, an interim distribution of 9400 crowns was also agreed upon, according to a scheme of division signed by all the parties. The warrant for this payment is not to be found among the ambassadors' papers, but there is a draft warrant for the payment of 8000 gold crowns:—To the Earl of Arran, Governor of the State and realm of Scotland, 2000 gold crowns; to the Earls of Argyle, Bothwell, Moray, and Huntley, each 1000 gold crowns; to Fleming, Erskine, Livingstone, Wemyss, Tulibarnie, and the "Chevalier de Candar," each 300 crowns; and to Mr David Panter, secretary of the Queen of Scots and of the Governor, 100 gold crowns. There can be no doubt that Lennox did hand over a considerable portion of the treasure for the purposes for which it was intended and that, in the beginning of January 1543-4, the amount remaining in his hands did not exceed 16,869 livres and 400 double ducats. For the time, it seemed impossible to gauge the limits of the Earl's petulance, and it was thought that the most certain method of compelling him to come to terms was to secure a majority in favour of France in the next meeting of the Estates. The documents which he had just signed and entrusted to the safe-keeping of the envoys formed a convenient, although treacherous, means wherewith to sow suspicion between him and the English faction; "so that, if the said Earl desired to withdraw to the said King of England, neither that King nor his servants can hope for any support or good faith from the said Earl of Lennox." On the 13th of November, the ambassadors claimed that the Anglo-Scots mistrusted him; and, shortly afterwards, Lennox proposed to them that he should marry the Queen Dowager. This was a much more practical step towards securing the Governorship than the proposed marriage with the infant Queen, which the Earl evidently now regarded as a somewhat remote, if not doubtful, contingency. On the other hand, his endeavour to force the hand of his opponents promised to facilitate the recovery of the remaining portion of the treasure, if he could only be persuaded to pass to France to discuss the marriage with the Duke and Duchess of Guise. The decision was, therefore, referred to Francis, with the advice that the

Earl should be withdrawn from Scotland, on account of the rivalry and "ancient enmity" between him and the Governor. "Without him everything would be in peace, and accomplished according to the pleasure of the (French) King; inasmuch as the foresaid supporters of the King of England would be powerless to sow dissension in the kingdom against the said Governor." "The Governor conducted himself so well and honestly in the administration of the affairs of the kingdom, and even acted in all things according to the good advice and counsel of the Queen." On the other hand, Lennox had prejudiced the interests of France by his endeavours to supplant the Governor, and by his practices with the nobility, to whom he alleged that the French King was prepared to assist him with money and stores. The envoys could not but admit the justice of the complaints against the Governor as the "abettor of heresy in the country," and as the "malversator of James V.'s fortune," said to amount to 300,000 livres. They explained, however, that his Anglophile leanings had been entirely due to the presence of Lennox in Scotland, and to his avowed intention of seizing the Regency. Hence the Governor went in fear of France, and favoured the English marriage, not unmindful of the promise of the Princess Elizabeth for his eldest son. There was now, however, no longer any doubt that he was a "good Frenchman"; and, along with the Earls of Argyle, Huntley, and Bothwell, he had promised that the marriage of the young Queen *with one of her subjects* would be decided in the coming Parliament, in accordance with the pleasure of Francis. The political situation had indeed changed, and with it the veracity of the ambassadors! As men of law and learning, they further proposed that an examination of the Register of the Scots Parliament be made, in the hope of discovering some flaw in the promise of marriage between Mary and Edward of England. Pedantry was, however, unnecessary; Henry's violence, and the seizure of the Scottish ships, had aroused the nation. The marriage was repudiated, and the "auld lyig and baund" with France was reconfirmed in the Treaty of Edinburgh, a decision which cost the French King 41,700 livres—part of the treasure—in *presents and expenses*! On 27th January

following, La Brosse and Mesnaige completed the narration of the discomfiture of the English faction, in their report of the submission of Lennox and Angus to the Governor. Francis replied, expressing his approval of the manner in which 41,700 livres of his finances had been spent, "looking to the evident fruit of that expenditure, and to the fact that the said kingdom remains entirely outwith the will and disposition of the King of England, under which it was about to fall."

There was, however, one regret: Lennox was still in possession of a portion of the treasure. In spite of "his great fickleness and evil misconduct," they were instructed to hold the "most gracious and amiable discourse" with him, so as to dispose him to come to France, and to hold out a hope of his marriage with the Queen Dowager, no steps having been taken in the recent Parliament to determine the marriage of the young Queen. At the same time, Francis directed that the Queen Dowager, the Governor, and the Cardinal should be informed that this step was taken solely to remove Lennox's unwelcome presence from Scotland. In his letter to Lennox, Francis expressed his pleasure that the dissensions of the Scottish nobility had been composed without bloodshed, and attributed to his influence the happy results of the recent meeting of Parliament, as well as the return of the Earl of Angus to the number of good Scotsmen, seeing that "he had always kept the said kingdom in trouble and division." "My cousin," he continued, "as it is presently necessary to take measures not only for preserving and defending the said kingdom of Scotland, but also, if necessary, for taking the initiative against the King of England, our common enemy, and, as I desire to employ every means within my power in this purpose, I beg you to come towards me with my councillor Mesnaige, so that I may decide with you as to what is necessary and *send you back immediately thereafter*. While you are here, I hope that some conclusion may be arrived at for the welfare and advancement of yourself and of your house, in the matter of which my ambassadors have heretofore written to me. For this purpose, I have retained at court my cousins, the Duke and Duchess of Guise, who await your arrival." This

letter did not reach Scotland until March (20th to 25th), at which date the Queen Dowager and the Cardinal decided that it should not be delivered to the Earl, and that Francis "should be informed of the inconvenience which might result therefrom." Its honourable purpose may be surmised from the imprisonment of his brother, John Stuart of Aubigny, who was sent to the Bastille without trial, in spite of the laudable intentions with which Sadler credited Lennox. Contemporary opinion of this intrigue was succinctly expressed by Montgomery, when he reproached Cardinal Beaton with being the ruin of an innocent man. Its justice in regard to the Cardinal is unquestionable, and it may be regarded as impartial in the case of the Earl, if considered in relation to the causes rather than to the results.

One point in this Register deserves notice. The Cardinal received payment of 1000 crowns, which he had advanced to the captains for re-victualling the French vessels, and the Queen Dowager 500 crowns, which she had given to the Earl of Moray. Further, in consideration of the expenses incurred by her in his service in Scotland, Francis granted her suit for letters of exemption from payment of certain taxes in respect of her dower-lands in France. These personal contributions to the party funds, as well as the marked confidence reposed by the French Court in the discretion of the Queen Dowager in the management of Scottish affairs, are a significant illustration of the dual policy which this talented ambassadress brought to a successful issue by the discomfiture of the Governor in 1554; and, incidentally, they tend to disprove the gossip reported by the English agent during her visit to France after the Treaty of Boulogne. In 1546, after the first attempt upon the Regency had definitely failed, she was entrusted with the French purse, to be used at her discretion—although, ostensibly, in accordance with that of the Governor and the Cardinal—to produce general contentment (MS. Balcarres Papers, vol. iii. 102). In 1548 the French courtiers submitted to a levy of 15,000 crowns, "drawn from their purses," to tide over the financial difficulties of the campaign which had sorely tried her temper (*ibid.*, iii. 24–25). This fit of ill-humour found expression in an

acrimonious correspondence with her brothers, remarkable for its candour and for the views expressed in regard to her daughter's kingdom, which she was defending in her family's interest. She evidently thought little of her brothers' chivalry. "It is true, I have found it strange, being happy to have so many brothers, that I have never been visited by one since I have the enemy on my arms (*depuis le temps que j'ay l'ennemy sur les bras*). I make you judge. Has one of you offered to assist me with a penny (*denier*) in all my necessities?" "When it is the question of the loss of a kingdom, nothing must be spared, for others are not easily gained." Her temper, she admitted, was not of the best; but she had passed the age when one can change a nature such as hers. She must be privileged to scold, because her troubles had reduced her to a chronic state of anger. If she had reigned according to her comfort, and forgotten her service to the affection of the French King, she would have consented to the treaties which her neighbours (the English) asked for; "which shows you I have desired to know (*connaître*) none but the King." A kingdom which has been accustomed to be subject only to one of its own nation is not so quickly subjected to a new master, the beginning being very difficult. Her family fail to perceive that she is called upon to bear the whole burden; for she must do two things—one against the enemy, and *the other to reduce those people to the new subjection* (*et l'autre à ranger ces gens là à la nouvelle subjection*). She believes her brother does not desire her place. It is none the less at his disposal for all the pleasure she has of it. During the financial impasse, she melted down all her own table plate, in order to coin money for the foreign troops in Scotland who were clamouring for their wages—"la cavalerie françoise se trouvera bien estonée sy elle n'a de la nostre pour la guider." She had even pledged her own finger-rings and everything of value which she possessed; so that she was out of patience, because there scarce remained sufficient plenishings for the service of her household (*Mémoires, Journaux de Duc de Guise*, pp. 32-6). The Rhingrave had given her his table vessel (MS. Bal. Pap., iv. 23 and 85) and as much money as he could obtain

(1265 livres) when she was unable to secure a further loan of 3000 crowns on behalf of the French King. She had received similar assistance by way of loan from the Governor, the Archbishop of St Andrews, the Earl of Cassilis, and others; while the Hamiltons had become security for the loans to the French soldiers—"as the King loves the affairs of Scotland, so may the Governor be satisfied"—and other Scots had lent the French soldiers as much as they could afford. During the visit to France—one object of which was to silence her detractors at the French Court—James Hamilton, Commendator of Kilwinning Abbey, granted an acquittance for 9600 livres (Tournois) on behalf of the Governor and the Archbishop; the Earl of Cassilis, one for 6600 livres; and Patrick Ruthven, one on behalf of his father for 1200 (MS. Bal. Pap., vol. v. 144 and 147). Mason reported that the French Court was wearied by her demands for money. They were, however, just demands, and amounted to a goodly sum independently of the Dowager's personal claim; and it is indeed a regrettable reflection that contemporary diplomacy had so attenuated the difference between the Scots and the defeated at Marignan that the proverb, "Pas d'argent, pas de Suisse," was also to be applied to them with but the slightest of mental reservations.