

II.

AN INSTANCE OF "LOOKING-GLASS WRITING" IN THE SIGNATURES OF A SCOTTISH CHARTER IN 1602, AND A CONSEQUENT DIS- CHARGE AND RENUNCIATION IN 1605, NOTED BY JOHN W. M. LONEY, F.S.A.Scot.

The occurrence of this eccentricity in handwriting is unusual in Scottish deeds, and, on that account, the present examples are considered worthy of record.

To what extent "looking-glass writing" was practised in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it is difficult to say. The best known case is that of Leonardo da Vinci, born 1452, died 1519. That genius and master of the arts and sciences "was left-handed;"² he wrote from right to left, and his writing, difficult under any circumstances to decipher, requires to be read reflected in a looking-glass."

There is appended a note of further references to this characteristic of Leonardo da Vinci³ which I need not further detail.

George Hamilton, resident in West Preston—or Salt Preston—now Prestonpans, was the owner of lands and houses there. His father Alexander Hamilton, in Salt Preston, had been infeft therein on 7th January 1541, and on 6th August 1569 a charter was granted by Mark, Commendator of Newbottle, in favour of Alexander Hamilton in liferent, and *George Hamilton* his son in fee. This was followed by sasine in favour of *George Hamilton* on 7th March 1570, and a Crown charter was granted on 8th February 1585 in his favour, as son and heir of his father Alexander Hamilton. On 7th April 1602 *George Hamilton* granted the charter before us in favour of his son George the younger. The deed

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxiv. p. 446.

² *Handbook of Painting*, by Kugler. Published: Murray, Albemarle Street, London, 1887, vol. ii. chap. xv. p. 395.

³ *Italian Painters*, by Giovanni Morelli. Published: Murray, Albemarle Street, London, 1892, p. 177.

The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci, compiled and edited from the Original MSS., 2 vols., Quarto, London, 1883; and *Reproduction of Leonardo's MSS.*, by M. Charles Ravaisson, Paris.

is in the Latin of the day, and bears the seal of the granter, which unfortunately is too much defaced for identification of the coat of arms thereon. The signatures of George Hamilton, the elder, and of the witnesses, are shown in closer detail (fig. 1).

It would appear that of even date with this charter (7th April 1602) the two Georges (father and son) entered into a contract and appointment, subsequently registered in the Books of Council on 26th October thereafter. By this deed, in supplement to the reservations in the

George Hamilton witness
 Thomas Hamilton witness
 Thomas Hamilton witness
 George Hamilton witness

Fig. 1. Signature of George Hamilton—first on deed.

charter, George, the elder, was to be paid certain sums quarterly by his son. Presumably both Georges would subscribe this deed, and it would have been interesting to note therefrom if the elder was consistent in his quaint method of signing. The second deed of 1602 is not forthcoming; but, on 21st January 1605, the elder George granted this discharge and renunciation in favour of his son, reserving to himself, during his lifetime, "ane littill foir chalmer with ane peice of zaird Lyand contigue thairto upone the foirgait as the samyne is edgit and circuit with thornes Togedder with ane littill peice of zairde at the bak of the said chalmer Bounded with ane littill edge and gairdene on the south Togedder also with fyve hundredth fruct of appills and peiris

zeirlic furth of the fruct zairds as the samyne grows Induring my lyfityme."

The discharge purports to be granted with the consent and assent of the rycht honourable Patrick Hamilton of Edmelstoun (who does not sign) and Alexander Cokburne of Wodheid (who does). It is signed

The image shows a document with several lines of handwritten text in cursive script. Below the text are several signatures. The most prominent one is 'Joseph Mansore'. To its right is another signature that appears to be 'Alexander Cokburne of Wodheid'. Below these are three more signatures, each followed by the word 'witness': 'Robert Hamilton witness', 'William Wood witness', and 'George Dickson witness'. At the bottom right, there is a signature that appears to be 'Wm. Hamilton'.

Fig. 2. Signature of George Hamilton—first on deed.

by *George Hamilton* "with my hand according to my wontit forme" in presence of four subscribing witnesses. The signature of "Wm. Hamilton" as a fifth witness is not accounted for, unless it was intended that his subscription was to be taken instead of that of Patrick Hamilton.

This second signature shows like character, and is, in fact, almost identical in its execution with the first signature on the charter, and it is also here shown in closer detail (fig. 2).