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Ne quid falsi dicere audeat, ne quid veri non audeat.

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Account of Manuscripts in the SCOTCH College at PARIS. (From the Preface to Mr Fox's Historical Work.)

ONE of the earliest and greatest difficulties that he encountered in the course of his labours, arose from the manner in which Mr Macpherson and Sir J. Dalrymple had explained and conducted their respective publications, and which he always considered as unsatisfactory. His complaints of both these authors were frequent; and the more he examined and studied their books, the more he perceived the necessity of making some further researches. He was anxious, if possible, to consult the original documents from which their extracts were made; and he was at first apprehensive, that nothing short of an examination of all the manuscripts of the Scotch College at Paris, could enable him to determine the degree of credit due to the extracts of Macpherson. But he must very soon have despaired of obtaining that satisfaction, for he had strong reasons to suspect, even before his journey to Paris in 1802, that the most valuable part, if not the whole of them, had been destroyed. Three important points, however, might yet be ascertained:— 1st, Of what the manuscripts, so long preserved in the Scotch College at Paris, actually consisted;— 2ndly, To what part of them either Carte or Macpherson had access;— 3dly, Whether any portion, copies, or fragments, of the papers were still in existence. The result of his enquiries will be best given in his own words, though upon the first point he had ascertained* something more than appears

* Among Mr Fox's papers were found a list of "the works which were placed in the Scotch College at Paris, soon after the death of James the Second, and were there at the time of the trench Revolution." It is as follows:

Four volumes folio, six volumes quarto,—Memoirs in James the Second's own hand writing, beginning from the time that he was sixteen years of age.

from the following extract of his letter to Mr Laing:

"With respect to Carte's extract, I have no doubt but it is faithfully copied; but on this extract it is necessary to make an observation, which applies to all the rest, both of Carte's and Macpherson's, and which leads to the detection of an imposture of the latter, as impudent as Ossian itself.— The extracts are evidently made, not from a journal, but from a narrative; and *I have now ascertained beyond all doubt*, that there were in the Scotch College *two distinct* manuscripts, one in James's own hand, consisting of papers of different sizes bound up together, and the other a sort of historical narrative, compiled from the former. The narrative was *said* to have been revised and corrected, as to style, by Dryden[†] the poet, (meaning probably Charles Dryden, the great poet's son,) and it was not known in the College whether it was drawn up in James's life, or by the direction of his son, the Pretender. I doubt whether Carte ever saw the original journal; but I learn, from undoubted authority, that Macpherson never did; and yet to read his Preface, page 6 and 7, (which pray advert to,) one would have supposed, not only that he had inspected it accurately, but that all *his* extracts at least, if riot Carte's also, were taken from it.

Two thin quarto volumes,—Containing letters from Charles the Second's ministers to James the Second (then Duke of York,) when he was at Brussels and in Scotland, MS.

Two thin quarto volumes,—Containing Letters from Charles the Second to his brother, James Duke of York, MS.

[†] It is the opinion of the present possessor of the narrative, that it was compiled from the original documents by Thomas Innes, one of the Superiors of the College, and author of a work entitled, *A Critical Essay on the ancient Inhabitants of Scotland*.

Macpherson's impudence in attempting such an imposition, at a time when almost any man could have detected him, would have been in another man incredible, if the internal evidence of the extracts themselves against him were not corroborated by the testimony of the principal persons of the College. And this leads me to a point of more importance to me. Principal Gordon thought, when I saw him at Paris, in October 1802, that all the papers were lost. I now hear from a well-informed person, that the most material, viz. those written in James's own hand-writing, were indeed lost, and in the way mentioned by Gordon, but that the Narrative, from which only Macpherson made his extracts, is still existing, and that Mr Alexander Cameron, Blackfriars Wynd, Edinburgh, either has it himself, or knows where it is to be found."

The above information was correct. There is strong presumptive evidence, that the Manuscripts of King James the Second were destroyed, but the Narrative, as described, was then, and is now, in the hands of Dr Cameron, Roman Catholic Bishop in Edinburgh. I could not be in possession of a person who is better qualified to judge of its merits, and on whose fidelity, should he be induced to print it, the public might more implicitly rely.— I am indebted to his accuracy and friendship, for some additional information respecting the manner in which the Manuscripts of the Scotch College were lost. As the facts are in themselves curious, I lay before the reader his succinct and interesting relation of them, contained in a letter to me, dated Edinburgh, March 2, 1808.

"Before Lord Gower, the British Ambassador, left Paris, in the beginning of the French Revolution, he wrote to Principal Gordon, and offered to take charge of those valuable papers, (King James's Manuscripts, &c.) and deposit them in some place of safety in Britain. I know not what answer was returned, but nothing was done. Not long thereafter, the Principal came to

England, and the care of every thing in the College devolved on Mr Alexander Innes, the only British subject who remained in it. About the same time, Mr Stapleton, then President of the English College of St Omer; afterwards Bishop in England, went to Paris, previously to his retiring from France, and Mr Innes, who had resolved not to abandon his post, consulted with him about the means of preserving the manuscripts. Mr Stapleton thought, if he had them in St Omer, he could, with small risk, convey them to England. It was therefore resolved, that they should be carefully packed up, addressed to a Frenchman, a confidential friend of Mr Stapleton, and remitted by some public carriage. Some other things were put up with the Manuscripts.— The whole arrived without any accident, and was laid in a cellar. But the patriotism of the Frenchman becoming suspicious, perhaps upon account of his connection with the English College, he was put in prison; and his wife, apprehensive of the consequences of being found to have English manuscripts, richly bound and ornamented with Royal arms, in her house, cut off the boards, and destroyed them. The Manuscripts, thus disfigured, and more easily huddled up in any sort of bundle, were secretly carried with papers belonging to the Frenchman himself, to his country-house; and buried in the garden.— They were not, however, permitted to remain long there; the lady's fears increased, and the Manuscripts were taken up and reduced to ashes.

"This is the substance of the account given to Mr Innes, and reported by him to me in June 1802, in Paris. I desired it might be authenticated by a *proces verbale*. A letter was therefore written to St Omer, either by Mr Innes, or by Mr Cleghorn, a lay gentleman, who had resided in the English College of St Omer, and was personally acquainted with the Frenchman, and happened to be at Paris at this time. The answer given to this letter was, that the good man, under the pressure of old age and other infirmities, was alarmed by the proposal of a

discussion and investigation, which, revived in his memory past sufferings, and might, perhaps, lead to a renewal of them. Any further correspondence upon the subject seemed useless, especially as I instructed Mr Innes to go to St Omer, and clear up every doubt, in a formal and legal manner, that some authentic document might be handed down to posterity concerning those valuable Manuscripts. I did not foresee that war was to be kindled up anew, or that my friend Mr Innes was to die so soon.

“Mr Cleghorn, whom I mentioned above, is at present in the Catholic seminary of Old Hall Green, Puckeridge, Hertfordshire. He can probably name another gentleman who saw the Manuscripts at St Omer, and saved some small things, (but unconnected with the Manuscripts,) which he carried away in his pocket, and has still in his possession. “I need not trouble your Lordship with my reflections upon this relation: but I ought not to omit that I was told, sometimes, that all the Manuscripts, as well as their boards, were consumed by fire in the cellar in which they had been deposited upon their arrival at St Omer.”

The gentleman alluded to in the latter part of the above letter, is Mr Mostyn, from whom Mr Butler of Lincoln’s Inn very kindly procured a statement of the particulars relating to this Subject, in the year 1804, and transmitted it to Mr Fox. It contains in substance, though with some additional circumstances, and slight variations, the same account as Mr Cameron’s, up to the period of the writer’s leaving St Omer, which was previous to the imprisonment of the Frenchman.

Mr .Fox. in a letter to Mr Laing, remarks, that, “to know that a paper is lost, is next best to getting a sight of it, and in some instances nearly as good.” So many rumours have been circulated, and so many misapprehensions prevailed, respecting the contents and the fate of the manuscripts formerly deposited in the Scotch College at Paris, that it is hoped the above account, the result of the Historian’s researches, will not be deemed out of its place in a Preface to a History of the times to which those manuscripts related.