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Joseph Robertson Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

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Original Documents.

THE FIRST RUSSIAN EMBASSY TO ENGLAND.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE MISSION OF OWSCHEIP NEPERA, AMBASSADOR FROM RUSSIA, A.D. 1556, AND HIS SHIPWRECK ON THE COASTS OF SCOTLAND.

COMMUNICATED BY JOSEPH ROBERTSON, ESQ., F.S.A. SCOT.

THE history of the First Russian Embassy to England is recorded in "A Discourse of the honourable receiving into England of the first Ambassador from the Emperour of Russia, in the yere of Christ, 1556, serving for the third voyage to Moscow: registered by John Incent, protonotarie." (Printed by Hakluyt, p. 332, edit. 1589, vol. i. p. 318, Reprint 1809.)

The ambassador was wrecked on the north-eastern promontory of Scotland, and certain documents regarding the wreck have been discovered in Her Majesty's General Register House at Edinburgh, by Mr. Joseph Robertson, Superintendant of Searches for Literary Purposes in that establishment, by whom copies (omitting clauses of style) have been communicated for publication in this Journal of the Archaeological Institute, in the hope that they may help to call the attention of English scholars to the materials for the illustration of English history and antiquities, which are preserved among the National Records of Scotland.

The first document of the series is a safe-conduct, in the usual form, by the Queen of Scots, granted "at the instance and request of our derest sistir the Quene of Ingland," and empowering "Laurence Huse, George Gilpyn, and Robert Best, Inglishmen, merchandis of the toun of London within Ingland, with their servants, to cum within the realm of Scotland, on hors or on fute, by sey or land, and to pass and repass through the samyn." It is dated at Linlithgow, on the 28th January, 1556-7; and was presented for registration before the Lords of Council and Session at Edinburgh, on the 6th February, 1556-7, by "Laurence Huse, doctour in the lawis, George Gilpyn, and Jhone Lewis, Inglishmen, merchandis in London."

On the same day, the same persons presented the following document for registration in the books of the Lords of Council and Session:—

In Dei nomine, Amen. Presentis publici instrumenti serie cunctis innotescat et palam fiet qualiter die, mense, anno et loco in calce presentis publici instrumenti specifice descriptis, Constituti personaliter preeximii viri Georgius Barnes et Andreas Judde, milites, et Anthonius Huse, armiger, Consules collegii sive societatis Mercatorum Anglie [versus] partes Russie et Moscovie, ditionis illustrissimi et potentissimi principis, Johannis Vesselevyche, Dei gratia Imperatoris totius Russie, ac Magni Ducis Valledermuskie, Muskoskie, Novigrotskie, Bazouskie, Plaskeskie, etc., negotiandi gratia traphicantium, dominorum et proprietariorum cujusdam

navis onerarie dicte *ly* Eduerd Bonaventure, oneris sive portagii centum et sexaginta doliorum, ac rerum, mercium et bonorum in eadem nave nuper in partibus Moscovie et Russie ditionis ejusdem Augustissimi Imperatoris oneratorum, ac apparatus, munitionum, victualium, et aliorum ornamentorum et instrumentorum nauticorum quorumcunque ejusdem, in ora Scotie juxta seu prope sinum seu littus maris Scotici dictum Buchan Ness vi tempestatum jactitate quassate et rupte, tam nominibus suis propriis, quam vice, loco, et nomine omnium et singulorum aliorum ejusdem societatis sociorum, fratrum, et collegarum, dixerunt, allegarunt et proposuerunt: Quod cum dicta eorum navis, mense Novembris ultimo, sub ductu et regimine Joannis Bukeland magistri sub Deo sive exercitatoris ejusdem, existens in itenere suo versus civitatem Londonensem partium regni Anglie portum vidilicet destinatum, vi tempestatum (ut premittitur) ita perierit et occubuerit ut magna pars apparatuum, rerum, mercium et bonorum in ea (ut preinseritur) onustorum et caricatorum, in mare natans, pars vero ad terram dejecta ad manus quorundam inhabitantium fines et oras de Buchquhan Ness predictas, et alia loca maritima adjacentia Serenissime Regine Scotie subditorum, pervenerit, et ab eisdem (ut ipsi exponentes asseruerunt) injuste occupata et detenta existit: Ideo exponentes memorati nominibus quibus supra . . . . fecerunt . . . dilectos sibi in Christo eximium virum Dominum Laurentium Huse legum doctorem, Georgium Gylpyn generosum, societatis Mercatorum Anglorum infra oppidum Antverpie residentium secretarium, Johannem Lewes, mercatorem civitatis Londonensis, Johannem Bukeland, magistrum sive exercitatorem navis predicte, Edmundum Roberts et Robertum Best . . . . suos veros, legitimos, ac indubitatos procuratores, actores, factores, negotiorumque suorum infrascriptorum gestores et nuncios generales et generalissimos . . . . quascunque res, merces, mercimonia, bona, mercandizas, et alia quecunque jura . . . . societatis predicte in quorumcunque manibus, possessione, retentione aut contractatione existentia, et precipue in manibus quorumcunque subditorum Serenissime Regine Scotie, qui bona, res, merces, mercimonia et cetera jura . . . societatis predicte nuper in dicta nave nuncupata *lie* Edwerd Bonaventure onerata, ac sic (ut premittitur) natantia reperta vel ad terram dejecta receperunt et subtraxerunt, ac penes se injuste detinuerunt et detinent in presenti . . . coram Serenissima Domina Regina Scotie, ejusque a consiliis dominis illustribus, ac coram quibuscunque admirallis regni Scotie, officialibusque, consulibus, magistratibus, et jus dicentibus tam ecclesiasticis quam secularibus quibuscunque, comparendum . . . ac bonorum, rerum, et mercium, ac ceterorum jurium . . . societatis predicte detentores et occupatores ad debitam satisfactionem et solutionem ac restitutionem eorundem, juxta juris exigenciam, cogendum et compellendum . . . Unde . . . factum est presens procurationis instrumentum per me Thomam Atkinson notarium publicum, signoque, nomine, cognomine, et subscriptione meis solitis et consuetis, unacum appensione sigilli communis societatis predicte, roboratum. Actum Londini, in edibus solite residentie Galfridi Walkeden, sitis infra parochiam Sancti Pancrasii, civitatis Londonensis, decimo die mensis Decembris, anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo sexto, et annis regnorum Serenissimorum in Christo principum Philippi et Marie, Dei gratia Anglie, Hispaniarum, Francie, utriusque Cicilie, Jerusalem, et Hibernie Regis et Regine, fide, defensorum, Archiducum Austrie, Burgundie, Mediolane et Brabanciei Comitum Haspurgi, Flandrie et Tirolis, tertio et quarto: Presentibus tunc

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ibidem eximio viro Rogero Martine, aldermanno civitatis Londonensis, Joanne Marshe, armigero, Leonello Duckette, Joanne Ryvers, Thoma Bannestar, Francisco Robensoune, mercatoribus civitatis Londonensis predicte, necnon Thoma Nicoles et Richardo Whellar testibus . . . vocatis et specialiter requisitis.

Sequitur subscriptio notarii.

Et quia ego, Thomas Atkynsoun civis civitatis Londonensis, publicus Sacra Regia auctoritate notarius [*etc. in forma communi.*]

Simultaneously with the registration of this deed, the following document was presented for registration by "Jhone Lewis, Inglishman, merchand of Londouu :"—

Universis pateat per presentes, me Owscheip Gregorybeche Nepera, oratorem Illustrissimi et potentissimi principis Johannis Desselebeche, Dei gratia Imperatoris Totius Russie, ac Magni Ducis Valledarmuskie, Muskoskie, Novigrotskie, Bazouskie, Plaskeskie, etc., fecisse . . . Johannem Lewesche, Edmundum Roberts, et Johannem Bukland, Anglos, mihi dilectos . . . meos legitimos procuratores generales et speciales : Concedendo et committendo eisdem . . . meam plenam . . . potestatem illas meas fortunas, res, merces, corporis ornamenta, et reliqua que amisi bona quecunque prope Bucquhanness maritimum Scotie, sexto mensis Novembris ultimo elapsi (tempore scilicet quo navis illa Anglicana dicta Edward Bonaventure qua ego, mee fortune, merces, et bona vehebamur, naufragium passa est) perscrutandi, recuperandi et recipiendi . . . . In quorum . . . testimonium has presentes meas mandati et procuracionis literas manu mea propria signatas, per notarium et tabellionem publicum ad majorem facti certitudinem subscribi curavi : Apud Edinburgum, quinto Februarii, anno a nato Christo millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo sexto : Coram Willelmo Maitland de Lethingtoun, secreti consilii scriba, Laurentio Huseo, doctore legum, Georgeo Gylpyn, Henrico Ray, Berwik nuncio, Anglis, Joanne Gibsoun, aurifabro Scoto, Hectore Troop, Joanne Brown, et Jacobo Nicholsoun, Scotis, notariis et tabellionibus publicis, cum multis aliis.

Sic subscribitur.

Et ego, Jacobus Nicholsoun, notarius et tabellio publicus, dictum Owscheip has presentes literas vidi scribere, et ultra audivi eum pronunciantem nonnulla verba sua lingua vernacula, que Robertus Best in hunc modum Anglice vertebat, Ego Owscheip constituo prefatos meos procuratores ad formam harum literarum suprascriptarum. Acta in hospicio Richardi Troop, hora nona ante meridiem, anno, die, et mense prescriptis, et coram testibus prenotatis.

Notices of the chief persons referred to in these deeds will be found in Hakluyt. The following account of the shipwreck is preserved in the contemporary "Historie of Scotland," by John Lesley, Bishop of Ross, pp. 257-8. Edinb. 1830 :—

"About this tyme [the end of the year 1556], thair come ane gret ship, and with her a pink, furth of Muscovia, bowin toward Ingland with ane ambassadour frome the Emperor of Muscovia, quhilk ship and pink was

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drevin be gret stormes and windis apoun the northest of Scotlande, at Kynardis heid, within the countrey of Buchane, quhair a gret nombre of thair cumpanie was dronit and boith the shippes, the moist pairt of his guidis losed be the wrake of the sey; bot the ambassadour him selfe was saved, with a gret part of his cumpanie, and was weill entertenit be the cuntreymen, and convoyit thairfre to Edinburgh to the Quene Regent, quha efter guid intertenement caused the Lord Hwme accompanie him to Berwik in the moneth of Februar thaireftir."

The documents, for which we are indebted to the kindness of Mr. Robertson, are interesting, more especially at the present moment, as connected with the earliest relations of friendly intercourse and commercial enterprise between this country and Russia. Those who desire information on this subject, may consult Dr. Hamel's "England and Russia," (translated by J. S. Leigh, London, 1854). Notices will there be found of the embassy of Owscheip, named in the narrative given by Hakluyt, "Osep Gregorywich Napea;" also of the early voyages of John Tradescant, Sir Hugh Willoughby, and other adventurous travellers. Some account of this first embassy is given by Stow and Holinshed, under the year 1557. Ivan IV., Vassiliewitch, or son of Vassili, to whom he succeeded in 1533, first assumed the title of Tsar or Czar. Amidst the horrors of continual warfare, he appears to have sought every means of elevating the condition of Russia, by introducing the arts and manufactures of more civilised nations, by encouraging commerce, and by conciliatory reception of foreigners and foreign missions to his Court. To Ivan was due the introduction of the art of printing into Russia. A remarkable illustration of his policy is presented in the embassy to the Court of Philip and Mary, "with certaine letters tenderly conceived," and presents, as a manifest argument and token of a mutual amity and friendship to be made and continued between their Majestys and subjects, respectively, for the commodity and benefit of both the realms. It is to be regretted that these credentials are not now to be found; they may indeed have perished in the disastrous wreck on the inhospitable shores of Aberdeenshire. The presents sent by the Czar, "spoyled by the Scots after the shipwracke" at Kinnaird's Head or Buchan Ness, consisted of the richest sables' skins, some of them entire, exceeding beautiful, with teeth, ears, and claws; four living sables, with chains and collars; lusarnes, and furs "worn onely by the Emperour for woorthinesse." Also a "large and faire white jerfawcon for the wilde swanne, crane, goose, and other great fowles, together with a drumme of silver, the hoopes gilt, used for a lure to call the sayd Hawke." (Hakluyt, vol. i., p. 323, ed. 1809.) After a stay of some weeks in London the envoy took his leave with all honours, charged with gifts considered most acceptable to the Czar,—rich cloth of tissue, scarlet, violet in grain and fine azure cloth; "a notable pair of Brigandines with a Murrian, covered with crimson velvet and gilt nailes; *Item*, a male and female lions."

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