

Letters (c.1622-1623)

James VI & I and Frederick V, King of Bohemia

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 28640, ff. 132r–135v

132r

A Copy of the Palsgraue his letter to our King 1623.

S[i]r I take yo[u]r Ma[jes]ties letter of the 19 of Nov[ember] for a greate honour & favour which when Mr Careleton yo[u]r Embassadour deliuered me some fewe dayes agoe he shewed me withall yo[u]r Ma[jes]ties intent concerning my restitutio[n] to mine honours and patrimony that it is still the same & doth continue firme & constant according to yo[u]r Maj[es]ties promises to labour & effecte by one way or other that the restitutio[n] may be whole & totall, as well in what belongeth to the Electorall dignity as the Pallatinate And that the proportion which yo[u]r Maj[es]tie makes in your letter (that I should be contente with the administratiue of my sonne, & he with the aspectiue [*Left margin:* to haue it after [th]e Duke of Bavar[ia] his death] of the Electorate together with the present possession of the Pallatinate) is but on all adventures; if perhaps your Maj[es]ties intent be frustrated of the effecte in the totall restitution leaving me otherwayes to my full libertie to chuse the lesse of these ij evills (if I may so call the[m]) one is a totall restitution of my estate & patrimony but with diminutio[n] or rather annihilation & bringing to nought (for so it is in effecte as touching mine owne person) of my Electorall dignity: the other of the recouery of both the one & the other by a warre, the event & issue whereof is doubtfull First of all a^h I ^{hu[m]}bly thanke yo[u]r Majestie for the Fatherly care it is pleased to continue & shewe in this case, which doth more comfort me & my deere wife the[n] any feare of humane accidents can make vs sad, or then it ca[n] contente vs to recouer the losse of goods & meanes by the losse our honour Wherefore I will take the liberty which yo[u]r Majestie giueth me in my answere to every particuler of yo[u]r Maj[es]ties letter. The first I

132v

perceiue proceedeth from mine enemies, which is a demande of personall submission vnder the Emperors safe-conducte & this they would haue performed before all other things But by the order of nature & that which is vsuall in like cases this being but a pointe of Ceremony the other a pointe of restitution which is materiall ought in reason to goe before At the least it is necessary that all things be first agreed & concluded ratifyed with assurance & such assecuratiou as shall be thought convenient & sufficient. And then if the meaning be reall & sincere on the Emperors side without any desire to take advantage of my person (as did Charles the 5 of the person of the Lantgraue of Hessen vpon the subtill distinctio[n] of a sillable of his safe conducte Einig or Enig) my submission may as well be made by a Deputie as otherwayes And so shall I be deliuered fro[m] those feares which the bloody executio[n] of Prague & other Cruelties exercised by the Imperialists might haue imprinted in his fancie who is not willing to loose himselfe willfully & on a bravery / Besides my single consent to such a Submission with the Condition to yeeld the Electorate to the Duke of Bavaria were enough to overthrowe my cause for ever forasmuch as the 2 Electors of Saxon & Brandenburg who haue alwayes protested against the transferring of the Electorate / & the other Princes of Germany that are of the same minde would quickly goe from the protestation which was

made on the behalfe of him who forsakes his owne right & giues ouer his claime, & in steade of favouring me they would become my opposites & enemies. Further the experience of what is paste may teache vs what to looke for hereafter & what the issue will be of such like conditions if we should agree to them – The Emperour hving taken his advantage & made vse of two in the sight of the worlde One was the Instrument of my Conditionall renunciation of the Crowne of Bohemia which I sealed in the yeere 1622 The other my Ratificatio[n] of my cessati{on}

133r

of Armes this last Summer. The First served him to hasten to a Conclusion the treaty of peace which was on foote with Bethlehem Gabor./ The second to discourage & disharte[n] the Electors of Saxony & Brandenburgh with the Princes of the lower Saxony that they might not enterprise any thing against him / Both the one & the other were divulged by him for these endes according as he had notice of their p[ro]jects before any thing was concluded or ratified. And in all likelihood he meanes to make the same vse of this propositio[n] of submission (if we should yeeld to the same) to stoppe 2 gaps with i bush, to hinder Bethlehems Gabors proceeding on the one side & to intimidate & feare the Princes of Germany on the other, who may lawfully excuse themselues for relinquishing him who is bound hand & foote by his Consent to a submission, wwhich if it be agreed vnto the Emperour hath it alwayes in his power to breake it, or to goe on as he shall thinke it expedient for himselfe. I assure my selfe also that your Maj[es]tie will haue regard that by this submission & treaty my proscription & banditing be not approved as being done contrary to the Constitutions of the Empire & so helde for nulle of the Elect[or] of Sax[ony] & Brandenb[urg] & by that meanes a brande of infamy be not set vpon me & my posteritie. Secondly touching the 2d pointe your Maj[esty] will be pleased to remember that Spaine hath alwaies from the first beginning put me in hope of a totall restitution in mine owne person / & the Earle of Bristowe wrote to me from Madrid in Nov. 1622 when the matche was not so farre gone on as nowe it is, that the k[ing] of Sp[ain] in case that a totall restitution were denied would joyne his forces to yo[u]r Maj[es]t[ie]s to constraene the Emperour to doe it. In steade of this restitution they haue congratulate fro[m] Bruxels the translation of my Electorate to the Duke of Bavaria at Ratisbone. They haue dismembred the lower Pallatinate by giuing Bergstrate one of the best pieces thereof to the B[ishop] of Mentz & the vpper Pallatinate by giuing diuise Territories

133v

& Lordships in it, to the D[uke] of Newburgh to ingage them the deeper in the quarrell that their particuler interests in mainteyning their owne may drawe the[m] to joyne in the generall defense of all that the Imperialists haue vsurped of mine. They confiscate [th]e goods of my subjects & of those that followe my party sparing neither widowe nor orphan. It seemes therefore necessary that first of all sufficient suerty & security be had of the totall rest{i}tutio[n] of my Electorate & Pallatinate before we goe on to newe propositions & treaties of Marriages which (as they are ordinarily handled by the house of Austria) are drawne at length & spunne out with delayes they hauing no other ayme but the augmentatio[n] & increasing of their owne greatnes without respecte of Civill honestie or of their word & promise. I haue the dolefull expe rience thereof in mine owne house in the person of one of my pr{e}decessours Frederick 2 who did contribute more to the laying of [th]{e} first foundations of the greatnes of that house of Austria then any Prince

in Germ[any] & for a rewarde of his good offices he was kept in hope & draawne along for the space of many yeeres by treaties & promises of marriage without any true & reall intent{e} (as appeared by the effects) of performing s̄o: so that seeing he who deserved so well of that house & whome in outward shewe they helde in as greate esteeme as any other Prince in Germany was vsed so vnworthely in matter of marriage, I, (hauing beene vnlawfully proscribed by the Imperiall Bandite & despoiled of my dignities & goods by the bitter hatred & unjust vsurpatio[n] of the Emp[eror] (the matching with whose daughter is nowe in question) know not what to promise to my selfe of such treaties other then the sam{e} effects of fraud & deceite of which my Predecessor abouen{[amed]} did feele the smacke & repente him when it was too late to remedie it. The Emp[eror] wants only 2 or 3 yeeres space which he would gladly gaine by a treaty of marriage to the end that he might in {[th]e} meane time establish in Germ[any] the translation of my Elect[oral] dignity & patrimoniall estate without feare that I should ever recover the l{ } opportunity that nowe I haue, whilst my claime is not prejudice{d}

134r

by the interposition of too greate an interualle & while as the memory of the vnlawfull proceeding in the publication of bandite ag[ainst] mmy person in the transl[ation] of my Elect[oral] dignity & occupation of my patrimony & estate is yet recent in the minds & hearts of the Germ[an] Princes who doe nowe compassionate the fresh bleeding woundes of my miseries & doe fervently & passionately desire to cure the[m] considering their owne interests & howe it may be their owne case.

And here I will answ[er] the last p. of yo[u]r Maj[esty]s letter where yo[u]r Maj[esty] commands me to consider what probable & peaceable meanes there are to reduce my estate to the former condition & to poize yo[u]r Maj[esty]s forces together with those of yo[u]r confederates & those which yo[u]r Maj[esty] may assuredly hope or loke for. If yo[u]r Maj[esty] hope for my restitution as an effecte of the Sp[anish] matche there is nothing else to be done but to expecte the evente with patience / & if yo[u]r Maj[esty] will still distinguish & make a difference betwixt Sp[ain] & the Imperialists there is no more to be said of that subjecte but that they did many monthes conspire to my ruine with the same forces the same councelles the same designes If it would please your Maj[esty] to lifte vp the Spanyards visard of faier shewes & beholde his hidden malice as well as yo[u]r Maj[esty] hath in the ende found the open violence & professed hostilitie of the Imperialists who besieged yo[u]r garrisons within my townes which were taken into your Maj[esty]s protection . I will vse the libertie which yo[u]r Maj[esty] is pleased to giue me in discoursing of yo[u]r Maj[esty]s forces of the forces of yo[u]r confederates & what may be in reason & probability expected of others frends & well-wishers. 1. I will beginne with the laste In which ranke I put the Princes of Germ[any] (to witte the 2 Elect[ors] Sax[ony] & Brand[enburg] & in effecte all the rest of except those of the Cathol[ic] league) who haue sufficiently declared th[eir] disavowing of the proceed[ings] of the Imper[ialist]s ag[ainst] vs & made knowne th[eir] judgm[ent] & opinio[n] / that the peace of Germ[any] doth depend on my restitution. Further the leavies of men which they made in the beginning of last Summer howsoever they were shortly after dismissed by occasion of that vnhappy misfortune which befell Chr[istian] D[uke] of Brunswicke) had not fayled without all doubt to haue beene employed for my aide if they had had the Countenance & helpe

134v

of some greate Pope Potentate to vpholde them & to oppose ag[ainst] the house of Austria. The same affection doth remaine still & the same resolution to lay holde on the first good occasion that shall offer it selfe for the libertie of Germ[any]. Neither will there be wanting handes enough to accomplish such a worke when it shall once be vndertaken openly & seriously seeing the nu[m]ber is greate & mighty of those who haue their interests joynd with mine. Yea the most parte of the soldiers both horse & foote that marche vnder the banner of the Cath[olic] league are of a contrary relig[i]on to theirs & their affections (as all the world knowes) are more inclined to the ruine of those Leagues{s} then their preservatio[n]. But both the Princes & the people doe wante (as we sawe this last yeere) some greate & puissant Prince t{o} be their leader. The k[ing] of Denmarke is he on whom all men caste their eyes, but he being full of Cicu[m]spection & wary is not willing to enter alone into the quarrell but maketh answ[er] to all requests that are made to him / That as other Princes haue their ey{es} [*Left margin:2*] on him so he hath his eyes on yo[u]r Majestie 2 As for yo[u]r Maj[esty]s forces it doth not belong to me to judge of them, but seeing yo[u]r Maj[esty] doth command me I will poize them in the ballance o{f} Commo[n] judgment That God hauing blessed yo[u]r Maj[esty] in the happy vnion of the 3 kingd[oms] Engl[and] Scotl[and] & Ireland vnder one heade your your ro{y} all person, the power of one of which 3 hath alone done so greate matters heretofore in the affaires of Christendome on this side the sea (& that even when it was Counterpoised by others) it may easil{y} appeere what yo[u]r Maj[esty] is able to doe with the jointe forces of al{1} these 3 together when yo[u]r Maj[esty] shall please to take such resolution Chiefly when the matter toucheth yo[u]r owne proper children Who o{f} the voluntary Contributio[n] which we haue already had for our su{p} porte from yo[u]r Maj[estys] subjects may easily conjecture what may be {ex} pected from them, when your Maj[esty]s publike authority shall ioyned wi{th} their private affections; there being no Prince in the world mor{e} beloued & revered of his subjects nor that hath greater power to command their willes & meanes for the service of yo[u]r Majesties [*Left margin:3*] person & children 3. Touching your Confedera{tes}

135r

I cannot^{can} but regrate that the hardnes of these vnhappy times hath separated a greate parte of them (the Princes of the vnion in Germ[any]) that did professe that Relig[i]on of which they did acknowledge yo[u]r Maj[esty] for defender & protector; but their willes are no whit altered but still the same, howbeit they haue bene forced to giue way to the present necessity of their affayres & when occasion shall offer yo[u]r Maj[esty] may make full accompte that they will shewe themselues such. There remayneth only the States of the Vnited Provinces (whether we haue had our refuge in the time of our afflictions) who doe mainteine their right by the helpe of God, the Scituation of th[eir] Country & the strength of their soldiers, all alone as yet against the power of the k[ing] of Sp[ain] vnderpropped & seconded by the Imperialists. And in steade of fainting vnder such a burden & listening to any overture of submission which is presented & offered to them every houre, they doe nowe prepare themselues for an offensive warre having made readie a brave flete which is on the pointe to set saile for the Weste Indies, to breake of & interrupt at leaste the yeerly returnes & peaceable returnes & transportatio[n] of siluer & golde from those partes by which the house of Austria doth continually advance & increase her greatnes. This designe is praysed of all honest men & such as loue publike libertie as being the sole & only meane to make the fearfull greatnes & puissance of Spaine fall to the ground like a greate & farre spreading tree cutte at the roote, which was thought too harde a taske for so small a spotte of ground as this

is, but will prove easie or at leaste feacible by forces competent for such an enterprise For if it please your Maj[esty] to make vse of the forces & meanes of this State by sea or lande to oppose theirs & by consequence my enemies Their profession of a loyall & sincere affection (even to the hazard of their liues & goods) tow[ards] yo[u]r Maj[es]ties service grounded vpon by-past experience, their present interests, & that which may be foreseene & judged of things to come, doe assure me that yo[u]r Maj[esty] may absolutely dispose of them, & by them being firmly & strongly vnited & joyned to yo[u]r

135v

Maj[esty] may commande & controlle all Europe at yo[u]r pleasure.

It is in obedience to yo[u]r Maj[esty]s commande that I haue so farre enlarged this discourse which I will ende with the reiteratio[n] of most humble thanks for the continuance of yo[u]r Maj[esty]s gratiou{s} & fatherly bounty particularly demonstrated in the care which i{s} hath of bringing vp my eldest sonne at yo[u]r Maj[es]t[ie]s courte who to gether with all the reste are at yo[u]r Maj[es]t[ie]s disposing, & we hope t{o} liue (notwithstanding our harde & sad condition) & see the day wh{en} we shall be able to pay yo[u]r Maj[esty] the fruite of a devout & filial gratitude / & I will remaine to the last day of my life

From the Hage the 20 of Decemb. 1623.

Post-script[um] S[i]r I am aduertised by my Welwillers that the Bish[op] of Ment. & the other Princes of the Papisticall league are very instant wi{th} the Electors of Sax[ony] & Brand[enburg] to bring them to acknowledge th{e} D[uke] of Bavaria for Elector of the Empire, which if they effecte is easie to judge howe much it will prejudice my affayres & the {com} mon cause of the Empire: Wherefore I beseech yo[u]r Maj[esty] most h{u[m]}bly that it would be pleased to prevent & hinder their designe{s} by interposing yo[u]r Maj[esty]s good offices & exhortations to the 2 secul{ar} Princes Electors, either by an Embassyge or Letters or some su{ch} way as yo[u]r Maj[esty] shall thinke meete & convenient for so importan{t} a busines, which aboue all requires speciall hast & dilligent Celerit{y}

Your Maj[esty] shall so heape vpon me more & more & increase not only my Obligations, but also the Obligations of the publike State of all Germany. /

Other manuscript witnesses

- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 151, ff. 54v–56r
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D 924, f. 93r
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 82, ff. 168v–177r
- Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.14.28, Part II, item 3, 33r–48v
- Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/RO/1/10, ff. 15v–26r?