

## P R E F A C E.

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THE collection of papers, a portion of which is here printed, was purchased for the British Museum in 1879, and is now contained in Egerton MSS. 2533–2562. In addition to the correspondence of Sir Edward Nicholas (ob. 1669), Secretary of State, it includes that of his son, Sir John Nicholas (ob. 1704), Clerk to the Privy Council, and of his grandson, Edward Nicholas (ob. 1726), Treasurer to Queen Mary; and it was formerly preserved at the family seat of West Horsley, co. Surrey, purchased by Sir Edward from Carew Raleigh in 1665. After the death of Sir John Nicholas each of his three sons, Edward, John, and William inherited the estate in turn, and the youngest, dying unmarried in 1749, devised it to Henry Weston, of Ockham, whose descendants have enjoyed it ever since.

The subsequent history of the Nicholas Papers is somewhat obscure. A rough schedule of them was drawn up by Edward Nicholas<sup>a</sup> in 1720–1723, and is now Egerton MS. 2562. Although apparently imperfect, it contains (as might be expected from the gaps in the present volume) a quantity of matter which no longer formed part of the collection when it was transferred from

<sup>a</sup> Brayley, *History of Surrey*, 1841, ii. p. 97, attributes it to William Nicholas, but the hand is undoubtedly that of his eldest brother.

West Horsley to the Museum. Among the missing letters is a valuable correspondence between Sir Edward Nicholas and Charles I. in 1641 and during the Civil War, together with other letters from Charles II. and various members of the royal family of later dates. These now belong to W. J. Evelyn, Esq., M.P., of Wotton, and have been well known since they were first printed by W. Bray at the end of his *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn* in 1818.<sup>a</sup> It appears, indeed, that before the end of 1750 the whole Nicholas collection had in some way passed into the hands of the then owner of Wotton, which lies a few miles only from West Horsley. The evidence of this is in the title of one of Dr. Thomas Birch's volumes of historical transcripts now in the Museum (Add. MS. 4180): "Extracts of the State Papers and Letters of S<sup>r</sup> Edward Nicholas . . . from the originals lately in the possession of his grandson William Nicholas, Esq., and now in that of S<sup>r</sup> John Evelyn, Bart." These extracts (which in many cases are merely lists) were made between 18 Dec. 1750 and 1 Feb. 1751, and they deal not only with the letters still at Wotton, but with the portion of the collection now at the Museum. It is probable therefore that Sir John Evelyn, after selecting what he considered most valuable, subsequently returned the bulk of the papers to their original home.

The greater part, however, of Dr. Birch's volume is derived from MSS. of Sir Edward Nicholas which, so far as I can ascertain, have disappeared altogether. Such is the case with an epitome of his life in his own hand, and a history of the Long Parliament, also apparently autograph. The former MS. was copied by Dr. Birch

<sup>a</sup> Bray supposed that they came to Wotton with the papers of Sir Richard Browne, John Evelyn's father-in-law. He died, however, as early as 1683, long after which date they were still at West Horsley.

in full, and is printed below, at the end of the Preface ; but of the latter, which consisted of no less than two hundred and eighty-five pages in folio, a few detached passages only were transcribed. Even more to be deplored is the loss of Nicholas's letter-books, three of which were at the service of Dr. Birch. He gives the title of one of them as follows,—“Copies of several of my letters to divers lords and others during my long exile for my loyalty, being dated from Feb. 165 $\frac{1}{2}$  to April 1653”; and the three together cover the period from 1648 to 1658. Unfortunately the extracts, though numerous, are seldom of any length ; but, as the letter-books themselves are not available, I have printed whatever appeared to be of interest,<sup>a</sup> unless the entire letters have already been published elsewhere from the originals. Many of the longest extracts are from letters of Nicholas to Sir Edward Hyde, being all that apparently survives of one side of an extremely valuable correspondence. It is curious that a very few only of the originals are preserved in the great collection of Clarendon State Papers in the Bodleian Library, which, on the other hand, does include a large number of Hyde's letters to Nicholas. The proper place of the latter is, of course, among the papers of the correspondent to whom they were addressed. Only three letters of Hyde, however, now remain in the Nicholas collection, and as none are mentioned by Dr. Birch it may be inferred that the rest were already detached from it when his extracts were made. Before they finally reached the Bodleian Library they were in the possession of William Man Godschall, Esq., of Albury, co. Surrey, who in 1782 sent them to the editor of the third volume of the *Clarendon State Papers*. The latter describes them (p. ii.) as

<sup>a</sup> All matter taken from Dr. Birch's MS. is distinguished by an asterisk in the margin.

“a regular series, scarcely broken by the loss of a single letter”; and they form a very important feature of his volume. The few extracts from Nicholas’s letters which accompany them in foot-notes were supplied by Lord Hardwicke (p. x.) and were no doubt taken from a transcript of Dr. Birch’s volume formerly in his possession, and now B.M. Add. MS. 31954.

But in spite of these and other serious losses the Nicholas Papers still make up a collection not easily to be edited within reasonable limits. A selection therefore being necessary, the appointment of Nicholas as acting Secretary of State in Aug. 1641 has been taken as a convenient starting-point, and the present volume extends from that date to the end of 1652. A good deal, however, has been omitted, as of little interest or already printed, or, in a few cases, for other reasons. Such, for example, are a long series of letters from Sir Thomas Roe in Germany in 1641-1642, which, having a distinct character of their own, seemed somewhat out of place, and papers relating to negotiations of Charles I. with the French Resident Montreuil in 1646, the unpublished portion of which is too insignificant in amount to be printed apart from the rest.

The employments of Nicholas before the volume opens are enumerated below in his own words. I need only therefore direct attention to his autobiography (p. xii.) and to the very curious “Memoranda in my course of life” which follow it. He belonged to the useful class of public servants who, entering official life at an early age, have risen to its highest grade by proved capacity for business and knowledge of affairs. The character given of him by Clarendon, though drawn by an intimate friend, is not undeserved: “Secretary Nicholas was a very honest and industrious man and always versed in business. . . . The king

called him to be Secretary of State, after Secretary Windebank fled the kingdom, upon his Majesty's own observation of his virtue and fidelity and without any other recommendation; and he was in truth throughout his whole life a person of very good reputation and of singular integrity" (*History*, ed. 1843, p. 371). His position in 1641, while Charles was in Scotland, must have been a difficult one. He had not as yet the authority of an actual minister, nor even a seat in Parliament, and that too at a time when the two Houses, as he wrote, were "full of jealousies and apprehensions" and the temper of parties required to be closely watched. How well he acquitted himself is best seen in his correspondence with Charles himself printed by Bray, with which the letters here naturally cannot compete in interest and value. Next to the King his chief correspondent was Sir Henry Vane, the Secretary of State in attendance; but the latter perhaps looked upon him as a rival, and their relations were not without a certain reserve. At the same time, as will be seen, they kept one another fairly well informed of the course of political events in the two capitals, and Vane's letters, supplemented by those of T. Webb and Endymion Porter, both shrewd observers who wrote their minds freely, convey a lively picture of the difficulties and perplexities of Charles in his efforts to conciliate the Scotch. His "infinite paynes" in business, in hearing sermons, and in singing "many psalmes accordinge to the mannor of the Scottish kirke," deserved better success; but a policy which, in Porter's phrase, alternated between "suttle designes of gaineing the popular opinion and weake executions for the up-howlding of monarkie" (p. 40), was foredoomed to failure.

After 1641 the paucity of materials until the end of the Civil War

is remarkable, but scarcely more so in the present volume than in that of Dr. Birch. A highly curious paper has, however, survived in the autograph instructions of Charles for the impeachment of the Five Members (p. 62); and the letters of Lord Digby in 1645 (p. 64) are a useful addition to the King's of about the same date, which were printed by Bray. The private letters of Nicholas's father and brother (pp. 62, 67) belong to a different class, and vividly illustrate the sufferings of those whom their enemies were "pleased to terme delinquentes." The old country squire "plundred thrice in one weeke," and the Dean of Bristol's wife, whose maid was to be seen "in the market sellinge of rosemary and bayes to buy bread," might well cry, "God, for his mercy, help us and send us peace!" Later on we find Nicholas himself in want (p. 70), and told for his comfort by Endymion Porter that "it is all our cases." This was after the surrender of Oxford in 1646, when Charles was a prisoner and Nicholas an exile at Caen. Porter, though living on the charity of an Irish barber, and without clothes in which to attend Henrietta Maria's Court at the Louvre, could still write sensibly and well, and keep up his spirits with epigrams on the "lowsie Scotts." From the beginning of 1647 the correspondence increases in variety of interest. Oudart's news-letters from London, scarcely legible in the faint medium by which their contents were concealed, are full of information; and from the side of Paris a new and lively writer appears on the scene in 1648 in the person of Lord Hatton. His long letter of 29 Aug. (partly taken up with a graphic account of the famous Journée des Barricades) is the first of a series in which the intrigues of the Court at the Louvre and the iniquities of the Queen's favourite,

Lord Jermyn, are the leading topics. Although it would be too much to follow his guidance implicitly,<sup>a</sup> the opinion he forcibly expresses of some of the leading Royalists is amply warranted, and is echoed in much the same terms by his more experienced correspondent.

To discuss here in detail the shifting phases of Royalist policy is impossible. Even before the death of Charles I., many affecting references to which occur in the volume, Nicholas had practically ceased to influence it, and afterwards the "hot brains," as he terms them, were still more in the ascendant. "You cannot imagyne," writes Hyde on 6 Apr. 1649, "the care hath bene taken to infuse prejudice into the King of all his fathers counsell"; and Nicholas was too obnoxious to the ruling party to be made an exception. He joined Charles II. indeed at Jersey in October, where he did his best as a Privy Councillor to support the interests of Ormonde and Montrose (p. 160); and he was even promised his former place of Secretary of State.<sup>b</sup> The promise, however, was coupled with the obligation to conceal it, "because of some engage-

<sup>a</sup> Hyde cautions Nicholas against him, 27 Jan. 165 $\frac{1}{2}$ , "Remember how many mistakes your intelligencer (who is still my noble friend) hath been always subject to, and the vexation that must still attend believing all that he says. All the discontented persons and the humorous resort to him, and from those he gathers what he writes, and is it like that can be all ingenuous?" (*Clar. St. Pap.* iii. p. 44). He mentions him again 17 May, 1652, "Till the receipt of yours I knew not that Lord Hatton discontinued writing to you. The intelligence is ill lost. These late alarms frighted him so that he removed from his house and brought all his books and fiddles to a lodging near us, where I visited him the other day. He is still my noble friend, but I have not the honour to see him often; but he lies as well as ever" (*ibid.* p. 70). The last words refer to Hatton's comfortable quarters, not to his want of veracity.

<sup>b</sup> Nicholas's memorial and the King's engagement are in Bray's *Ecce lyn*, iv. p. 94.

ment, I believe, to the Queen" (p. 149, note<sup>a</sup>), and was not formally carried into effect until 1654; and, although Charles renewed it when he went to Scotland in 1650, "he hath left," Nicholas complains (p. 188), "no business to my care nor any means to enable me to live." This was the less to be wondered at as Nicholas was the leading opponent of the Scotch expedition and of the King's previous concessions to the Commissioners of the Estates and Kirk. His own part in the negotiations at Breda was limited to the first day's debate, after which he and Lord Hopton were promptly "set aside." Himself a staunch supporter of Episcopacy, he thoroughly distrusted Argyll and his allies, going so far (p. 194) as to suspect them of a design to get both Charles and the Duke of York into their hands that they might "have a good prize from the rebels of England" for the two together and so make an end of the family. That the King's sincerity was, to say the least, equally open to suspicion is clear from his significant letter to Lord Beauchamp (p. 180).

While Charles was chafing under the Covenant in Scotland, Nicholas resided chiefly at the Hague. Notwithstanding his complaint quoted above, he was addressed and acted as Secretary of State, and carried on a large correspondence on his own account besides.<sup>a</sup> Only a very few, however, of the letters written to him at this period will be found in the volume, the single letter which, as he declares, was all that he received from the King or any about him for nearly a year (p. 233) not being one of them.<sup>b</sup> Among others, besides Lord Hatton's, deserving particular notice are those of Sir G. Carteret, on Lord Jermyn's proceedings in

<sup>a</sup> His activity in this respect may be seen from a daily list of the persons to whom he wrote during 1650-1655, and 1660-1668 (Egert. MS. 2556).

<sup>b</sup> He no doubt means Charles's letter of 3 Sept. 1650 (Bray's *Evelyn*, iv. p. 194).

Jersey (p. 258), and of the Bishop of Down, describing Blake's capture of Scilly (pp. 250, 255). Of Lord Ormonde's letters only those are given which are not printed in Carte's *Ormonde Papers*, including a pathetic complaint of the perversity of the Irish people (p. 215), written on his departure from Ireland, and couched in terms which some recent Lords Lieutenant might appropriately have adopted. As to Nicholas's own letters, their tone is uniformly that of weariness and disgust, turning to despair when the Royalist cause was seemingly annihilated at Worcester. Like Hopton and others, he then thought seriously of compounding for his estate and submitting to the expected clemency of "Cromwell and his masters," and an appeal for advice in the matter gave occasion for an admirable letter from Ormonde (p. 276). It must have been some satisfaction to Nicholas that one of the first acts of Charles after he had effected his escape to France was to summon him, with Hyde, to Paris. Whether poverty and ill-health<sup>a</sup> were the real and only, as they were the ostensible, causes that hindered his going may be doubted, but, as a matter of fact, he did not leave the Hague until July, 1654. This was so far a fortunate circumstance that we owe to it the continuance of his correspondence with Hyde and other of his friends who were at Paris with Charles.

<sup>a</sup> In Egerton MS. 2558, f. 15, are some rough notes of a cold water cure which he successfully adopted at this time. They begin "This  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Dec. att y<sup>e</sup> Hague, 1651, I, being above y<sup>e</sup> age of 58 yeares, did begin to use the putting my head into a payle of spring or pump water y<sup>e</sup> coldest I could get, being then troubled with a great heavines in my head and eyes, and soe great a chillines in my head as I could not endure y<sup>e</sup> ayre with a dubble lined capp. I was alsoe often troubled with a deafnes and noyse in my right eare caused by y<sup>e</sup> cold I tooke in my head."

The latter for his own part appears to have borne his absence with equanimity. Writing to Hyde on 11 Jan. 1652 (p. 283), Nicholas expresses his belief that after all "his Majesty is well pleased that I forbore to come . . . being I am so very unacceptable to the Queen," and more than once afterwards he breaks out into bitter reflections on his subservience to his mother. Unfortunately throughout 1652 the correspondence here is entirely from Nicholas's side. There is abundant interest, however, even in the detached sentences extracted from his letters by Dr. Birch. Among the various subjects he touches upon are the breach between the English and Dutch ("these dull butterboxes," he calls them), the charges of treason brought against the Secretary Robert Long, the expulsion of Thomas Hobbes from Court as an atheist, the extraordinary proposition of John Lilburne for the King's restoration, and the controversy of Salmasius with "that arch traitor and declared enemy to monarchy, Milton." Writing to his intimate friends he is free in his strictures on personal character, nor are his judgments often so mildly expressed as when he qualifies his praise of the Princess Royal by imputing to her "the naturall imperfection of her family, an unwillingness to put herself to think of business" (p. 293), or dismisses the Duke of Buckingham with the remark, "but indeed he hath wit enough, but I doubt he wants ballast" (p. 287). For those who credit Nicholas himself with one of the highest and least exceptionable characters among the more prominent members of the Royalist party, it must be painful to read his scarcely-veiled suggestions for the murder of the Parliamentary Envoys Dorislaus and Ascham which are quoted on pp. 135 (note), 172.

With regard to the materials which still await publication, it is

enough to say at present that from the end of 1653 the original correspondence largely increases in bulk, the letters of 1655 in particular filling a volume of more than six hundred leaves; and, as Nicholas was then formally reinstalled as Secretary of State and the centre of Royalist policy and intrigue, there is no reason to apprehend any diminution of interest.

G. F. W.

8 Sept. 1886.

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ERRATA.

- P. 59, note <sup>a</sup>. For "wa" read "was."
- P. 68, note <sup>b</sup>. Add "A John Dirdo, gent., was, however, buried at East Knoyle, co. Wilts, in 1694 (Hoare, *Wilts*, Mere Hundred, p. 184)."
- P. 167. For "Breda,  $\frac{1}{2}$  Jan. 1649 [50]" read "Breda,  $\frac{1}{2}$  Junij, 1649." The proper place of the letter is on p. 137.
- P. 243, line 10. For "Taafe" read "Taaffe."
- P. 299, note <sup>a</sup>. For "Francis" read "Frances."