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LETTERS OF THOMAS MORRIS, OF MOUNT MORRIS, A.D. 1694-6.

BY HERBERT MONCKTON, TOWN-CLERK OF MAIDSTONE.

IN the Museum at Maidstone there is a valuable collection of MS. notes, made by the late Clement Taylor Smythe, an antiquary of no mean reputation, forty years back. Mr. Smythe spent very many years of his life in collecting information about Maidstone, and the surrounding country, with a view to publishing a more detailed history of the town than had then appeared. Unfortunately death put an end to his project; and the mass of original letters and papers acquired by him, from all parts of the country, have very recently been presented by Mr. Smythe's relatives to the Maidstone Museum. Among them are some original letters which were given to Mr. Smythe, in the year 1839, by Mrs. Morris of Canterbury, having been written by Thomas Morris, Esq., of Mount Morris, in Monks Horton, near Hythe, between the years 1694 and 1696.

Mr. Morris wrote these letters from London, and in them he clearly and truthfully describes the proceedings of the Government during those troublous years. He is supposed to have been one of the private Treasurers to that unfortunate Prince King James II.

The efforts of William the Third to suppress the Jacobite conspiracy, and to repel the threatened French invasion, are well known; but these letters throw some additional light upon the events of the years 1694-6.

Lo. COSIN,

I thought to have been with you long before now, but my business contrary to my expectation detaines me here still, but I

have now allmost dispatcht it. As for the bushes you desire, you know where to have them better than I, so I desire you to gett them any wheres, where you can have them; to most advantage, & those which are good. The House of Commons have been taken up this 5 or 6 dayes about Bribes taken by some of the members in the business of the Citty Orphans and the matter of the East India Company, and yesterday they sett till 9 a'clock in the night about it, and fell very foule on Their Speaker* & voted him Guilty of a great misdeameanor & Crime for taking 1000 guinnies after passing the Orphans Bill, and too day the House could not sitt because the Speaker was not there, he was taken ill with a fitt of the Collick: and there's no doubt but he will be turn'd out, & they choose a new Speaker, the House was yesterday in a great heat, but all this hinders the King's business. They have now laid aside the tax which was designed both upon leather and woollen cloth, and yesterday they have resolved to lay it on Coales 5^d a Chalder, and Glass bottles at 12^d a dozen, as also on Births, Burrialls, & Marryages for 5 yeares.

They have allso resolved that the old mony shall be called in & new mill'd mony coined, and that the mill'd Crownes that are now shall goe for 5^s 6^d, and the mill'd half crownes at 2^s 9^d, so with my love to you & yo^r wife, I rest

Your lo. Friend,

London, the 13th March, 1694.

T. M.

Lo. COSIN,

I sent you on thursday last the surprising newse of a detestable plot discovered & an Invasion intended neer you at Dover by the French, in the Gazette and 2 printed newse letters. There was certainly a most desperate plott and design of landing 26 thousand men somewhere in Kent (it might be very neer you and the whole kingdom would have been in a desperate invasion). For they were shipping them off at Callais, when Admirall Russell appeared there with our Fleet on Friday last, there was they say 3 or 400 transport boates & vessells and 17 or 18 sail of French men of warr ly between Gravelin & Dunkirke. They ly so far within the sands and the tides being low, the Admirall Russell could not come at them, but he hath hemm'd them all in. 'Tis said allso that there's 8 or 9 french men of warre gone to Scotland with 3000, some say

* Sir John Trevor.

6000 men to land there. So 'tis thought they may now come short home, Admirall Rook* is expected every day from Spaine, But Admirall Russell hath already a fleet of about 60 saile of men of warre, so that he hopes he shall give a good acct of these 17 or 18 French men in a little time. The Parliament have altered their Acte and have now brought in a Clause that no Guinnyes shall in paym^t exceed 26^s, so that thereupon they are fallen here to 24^s & 24^s 6^d, a peece, so with my love in hast I rest (but was willing to give you this acco^t for yo^r better satisfaction)

Yo^r lov. Friend,

Lond^o, 2^d March, 1695.

T. M.

Lo. COSIN,

Since my last I have none from you, on Saturday the King passed the Act, wherein is a Clause, that none shall proffer Guinnyes in Payment at above 26^s upon penalty of forfeiting the money and double vallue too (as they tell me). Guinnyes are risen here upon this since Friday, from 24^s to 24^s 10^d and 25^s a peece, about which price 'tis thought they will continue. The House of Commons are goeing on with a Bill against the Exportation of Wooll, in which they give leave to bring Wooll hides & Tallow from Ireland to certain ports in England, which Ports are to be named in the Act.

Bills of Indictment for high Treason are found against Lieut. King, Keyes & Charnock, which 3 are to be tryed on Wednesday, (Capt^a Porter and one la Rue are the Wittnesses), one Capt^a Stow (one named in the Proclamation) is also taken.

Admirall Russell is come into the Downes, having left S^r Clousely Shovell to watch the 17 French men of Warre that ly neere Dunkirk, which are gott so amongst the sands that 'tis feared we shall not be able to come to doe them any damage before they gett in to Dunkirk with these spring tydes, the wind blowing so hard has hindred us also, which is great pitty.

There is about £100,000 coyned at the Tower & carryed into the Excheq^r, and they goe on coyning having now 8 Presses at work. We are all very quiet here, onely 4 Companyes of the Trained Bands goe out every night, whereof one Company watches at Newgate, so with my love I rest

Your lo. Cosin,

Lond^o, 9th March, 95.

T. M.

* Sir Geo. Rooke, of St. Lawrence, Canterbury.

The House of Commons have passed the Bill for a duty upon windowes, to make good the badness of the Coyne. I wonder the Snow should be so deep with you, we have fluds of haile & snow here every day, but none of it lyes.

Lo. COSIN.

I have well reed yo^{rs} of the 9th, I writt you one the same day, yesterday Charnock, King and Keyes were tryed. The intended assasination was fully proved ag^t them, and their sevrall meetings & consultations about it, so they are condemn'd, & no doubt but the next week they will be executed, and then they will go on to try more, S^r William Perkins was taken on Tuesday, who was a great man in it, and I believe he & Goodman will be the next that are tryed, For I assure you the King seemes to be in good earnest now, & not to lett them goe off as they have done, They are not come to meddle with the invasion yet, they beginn first with the assasination. Charnock made some little defence as that what was said, was in Jooke over a glass of wine, but that signified nothing, the other 2 made no defence.

I see there has been searching often about you, I wond^r the Esq^r came off so well if it was so as you say, & that he was not had up. I see you have sent up Hunt & 4 others, which is very well, but if after all you have no evidence, what can be done with them, you should find out some prooffe to charge them with, or elce all that you say or is reported will signify nothing. And if things were well & thoroughly examined into below, I should think more proof might be found against them, & that would doe good service.

I thank you for getting some bushes into Whites ground, pray see if you can gett him to teene them out. I am sorry the weather is so severe, 'tis so here, onely we have no snow lyes, so with my love I rest

Y^r lo. Friend,

T. M.

The act for Guinnyes not goeing for above 26^s does not beginn till Ladyday, & the forfeiture is double the vallue of the mony, & £20 besides.

For more newsse I referre you to the prints I send Jane. The People gave severall great shoutes when they were brought in Guilty.

You say there was great recourse to the House, & day & night riding before the Plott broke out. Why was not some of his

servants now at least taken up & strictly examin'd; feare would have made them squeeke & tell the truth, better so than a whole nation to be involved in blood, warre & Ruine, so that you seem to be wanting amongst y^rselves as some think.

March 12th, 1695.

Lo. COSIN,

Yours of the 20th I have rec'd As to Clipt mony the Collectors & Receivers are bound to take any of the Quarters paym^{ts} for the Tax, till the 4th day of May next, tho' it was not p^d with the first Quart^r. The King sett out a Proclamation the last week for that very purpose. But after the 4th day of May they are not to take none, neither doe we yet know what will goe. you must take punchable mony.

Here's a Report this day that Admirall Rooke was come to the Landsend with all his fleet, w^{ch} is great newse if it please God to hold true. On Tuesday and yesterday, Rookwood, Cranbourne and Lowick were tryed, all found guilty & condemn'd. With my love I rest.

Your lov. friend,

April 23^o.

T. M.

Lo. COSIN,

The King's Proclamation is not yet come out, for fixing the Dayes how long clipt mony is to goe, but we expect it in a short time, but the Commons have this day voted that the loss on the Clippt mony shall be made good by a Duty to be laid on suggar. They seem inclined that the Tax for the Warr should be laid on Land againe. They have voted for the Army and Navy Five millions & two hundred thous^d pounds, & to make good the loss on the money, One million & two hundred Thousand Pounds. There are severall projects offered to them for the raising of money, one is for 2^d a week to be paid for evry ffeather bedd in England. Another is for all persons of such a degree to pay a farthing a day, of such a degree a penny a day, and others 2^d, others 3^d, & others 4^d or 6^d a day, & some think that this last may goe nigh to take. The Lords & Commons are both vary angry at a Scotch East India Company the King hath sett up at Edinborrow, and have p^resented an Address to his Ma^{ty} shewing the dangerous & evil consequences.

The Commons did make a vote against Peoples wearing Gold & Silver during the Warr, but 'tis thought that will not goe forward.

Guinnies goe still in payment for good at 30^s, but in Lumbard street amongst the Goldsmiths for no more than 28^s 6^d, and they talk of 28^s so that they are falling, and at last they will fall all over, which I thought good to let you know, and remaine

Y^{rs} &c.

London. 19th Decem, 1695.

T. M.

COSIN,

On munday the Parliamt was Prorogued to the 16th June, but before they rise, they gave a parting blow about Gold & Silver, & ordered the King's Atturmy Generall to prosecute all those who should either pay or receive Gold or Silver any otherwise then is ordred by Act of Parliamt. So that on munday next all here in Town are like to be at a great loss for mony to pass and to buy bread & other necessaryes, for 'tis now thought that all clipt mony will be refused. Cranburn, Lowick and Rookwood were this day executed at Tyburne. S^r Miles Cook son is indicted of high Treason. 'Tis thought the King will goe away on Friday or Saturday next by way of Canterbury.

I am,

29 April, 1696.

T. M.

'Tis Reported a Bill for high Treason is found against Ferguson and one Stincee a hoser.