

SCOTTISH PLOTS

Thomas Scot (–1660)

to William Lenthall (1591–1662), Speaker of the House of Commons (1640–1655, 1659–1660)

Aylesbury, 3 October 1648

I am not ignorant what cold acceptance unsuccessful services may expect, and though I have cause enough to presume mine may prove no other, yet it shall never repent me to have set myself to serve any commands of yours (which I shall endeavor with a faithful heart), whatever the returns may be, owning no power on earth which I more truly honor, or more willingly obey.

Sir, I was commissioned by your order to be assistant to the committee formerly appointed to examine the Duke¹ and such others as were taken in the late defeat of the Scottish and northern forces, which, when I considered and compared the power with the papers in my hand, I thought it insufficient to the end propounded. Most of those letters which we had being intercourses between Sir Marmaduke Langdale² and one Holder (which goes by the name of the Prince's agent, was taken near the exchange by some of Major-General Skippon's volunteers and now a prisoner in Windsor Castle), by which I found him the greatest wheel in all that northern engine, if not of the whole design that lately broke out against you in so many parts and counties of the Kingdom, and had done in more, and more fatally, if the same good hand of Providence (which has carried on your undertakings in His and His people's cause with such marvelous workings as no story can parallel) had not graciously disappointed and confounded it.

I find him, by these papers, the channel through which most of those streams of wickedness ran, a kind of ocean that received all the rivers into its bosom and transmitted them, by secret and underground conveyances, to rise again where they might most fitly serve their great end, your end and destruction, communicating the commands he had from France and the Isle of Wight, supplies of men, money, and ammunition from the city, and intelligence from your houses to the north, west, and where not, of which I shall say no more at present. But this observation made me judge his examination (being previous) might be of great use. Yet finding your commands of my service made diurnal news, by which I fear it may somewhat suffer, I did not move you to enlarge my commission, but applied myself to Derby House, where I understood they had designed the same thing; and, upon some intimation, they added to their own agent another member of yours and myself, giving us, or either of us, power to examine this Holder.

Thus instructed, on Saturday last I advanced to Windsor, and that night expected my fellow commissioner. But other occasions directing him another way, on Sabbath in the evening we applied to the work, where we found the man, according to the nature of the greatest wheels and principles of motion, shy and silent, reserving himself under the wary guard of not answering anything that might tend to his own accusation. And that if anything criminal were laid to his charge, he would submit only to law and a legal proceeding concerning it, inferring, by implication, that Parliamentary disquisitions were not so legal as he wished.

We replied as occasion served, but let it rest upon that night, and the next day charged him with some interrogatories, which I extracted from the contents of his own letters; which though he would not answer positively, but under that guard and reservation, yet we found it astonished him. And lastly, not to trouble you further with this first expedition, after some velitations and skirmishes on our parts, and wheelings and tergiversations on his, putting forth the best industry and artifice that we had, we got an acknowledgment that all these letters were (if not vitiated and corrupted since he wrote them) of his own hand-writing; by which I presume there is enough to hang twenty honest men by those known laws of the land, and the birthright to claim so much.

¹ James (1606–1649), Duke of Hamilton was captured on 25 August 1648 after the Battle of Preston

² Sir Marmaduke Langdale (1598–1661), escaped a Parliamentary prison in early October 1648

Sir, the particulars thereby discovered I shall forbear, lest I be guilty of my own diurnal, till, having improved them to the uttermost, you command a report of them.

I got not hither yesterday till near midnight. I shall not reach past Northampton this day, but hope tomorrow to wait upon the Committee at Leicester, or where else I shall find them, with my best endeavors to serve you, and receive your further commands, as becomes him that is your un-worthiest member and humblest servant...

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:28–31.