

REPORT FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Sir Walter Strickland (c. 1598–1671), English Ambassador to the Netherlands (1642–1651)

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

The Hague, 21 August 1649 *[NS]*

About six weeks or two months since, there was brought to my house an Englishman, who called himself Edward Harrington, who told me he had formerly been a servant to the Earl of Forth or Brentford,¹ and that he had observed that the design of the Scots by their interesting themselves in the English affairs was to advantage themselves and to become arbitrators, for their own benefit, of all our differences. He said he had followed the late King's party as thinking himself obliged so to do by some oaths which he had taken, and by his being crowned king. But now, those obligations ending by his death, and he not having the like to Prince Charles and being unwilling, as an Englishman, to be serviceable to the Scots, as he had been, to the prejudice of his own country, he told me he was desirous to do his country some service, which he thought he could do by discovering the design of Colonel Cochrane,² who was going to Hamburg to set afoot some negotiation with those lords to engage those lords and the company of English merchants to embrace the interest of Prince Charles, which he told me he could do if I would write to the deputy of the English merchants, or some other of my friends of that company. But I feared he might abuse the merchants by color of my letters, and therefore I absolutely refused to give him any letter, either to the deputy or any other merchant, and told him if he intended any real good offices, as he had promised, I would write a few lines to Mr. Parker, the secretary of the company.

The effect of that letter was no more but to let Mr. Parker know that, though he had been of the King's party, he had promised to do good offices for the company; which if he performed, and Mr. Parker pleased to advertise me of it, I should do the best I could that he might receive a reward for what he should perform, after the service was done. For I told him plainly that without doing some real service, I could not be assured of his fidelity. But I know Mr. Parker was able enough to know how to make use of such a man, if he were honest, by confiding in him; if not, to see through his pretences. But I was not willing to hazard so much upon the judgment of any merchant, and therefore did not, nor would not, write to any of them by him. But it seems Mr. Parker was not then at Hamburg, but at London, and so the deputy of the company opened the letter, and thought it some ground of credit to Harrington, though indeed it was not, but only so far as his future services should warrant him.

This Harrington wrote to me two letters, both which I answered in one. His first letter was to represent unto me the great danger of Cochrane's negotiation in respect of his violence against the Parliament, and told me he knew no way so likely to prevent him as for me to come to Hamburg and take upon me to oppose him. Before I answered that letter, I received a second, and that was to press me to come to Hamburg and to persuade me to persuade the English company to give him a sum of money which, he said, need not be very great, to gain over Cochrane, who was discontented, not having received such moneys as he expected at The Hague.

I answered both letters in one; which, as I remember, was all the letters that I ever wrote to him. First, for my coming, I wrote to him I could not do it because I had no commission from the Parliament. For the second, of taking off Cochrane by persuading the merchants to give him money, I was no way of his opinion; for I did not think Cochrane, or his negotiation, so considerable. And if the merchants had need of assistance from the Parliament, they need but write to Mr. Parker, who was then at London, by whom the merchants might receive such assistance as was necessary for their public interest, it being, in my opinion, no way suitable to the

¹ Patrick Ruthven (c. 1573–1651), Earl of Forth and Brentford, General-in-Chief of the Royalist army (1642–1644)

² Sir John Cochrane (c. 1604–), Royalist envoy to Denmark and Hamburg

interest the town of Hamburg had with England to give any ear to Cochrane's negotiation and therefore, for my own part, I did not apprehend the danger so great as he seemed to conceive it.

This is all that ever passed betwixt Harrington and myself. Upon which, it seems, he framed a plot, into which the merchants were something too easily drawn by a counterfeit letter, supposed to be written by my brother to him; a copy of which I have herein enclosed. By reason of which the deputy and two merchants were unhappily taken and seized, but very happily rescued, and brought back to Hamburg.

Truly I do not know, since this law of taking and killing men is grown thus common in foreign parts, how any man who serves you abroad, or owns the interest you are engaged in, can be safe if you do not resent it and let the ministers of foreign princes and states know that you expect those that own your cause should be protected if they expect that those who belong to them should be protected in the Commonwealth of England and its territories.

I have had audience of the provincial states of Holland, as resident to the Commonwealth of England, and have demanded the same of the States General; but they had written into the provinces to know the mind of their principals, of which they say they have yet received no answer.

I have given account of these things to the Council of State, which makes me not so frequently trouble you.

Montrose³ is yet at The Hague. Many of his men, either for want of money, or to execute some ill design in England, or it may be both, pass frequently into England.

The malignants seem to hope much from the peace now in treaty betwixt France and Spain, though it be very doubtful what the issue will be, for Spain refuses now to give the same conditions to France which it offered at Münster before the States had made peace with Spain. It is thought here that Prince Charles will pass privately into Scotland or Ireland in some Dutch ships.

I hope the same Providence will accompany the actions of the Parliament with which it has hitherto been blessed; to the effecting of which, your own services have been very instrumental.

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:155–159.

³James Graham (1612–1650), Marquess of Montrose, leading royalist commander in Scotland (1644–1646)