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NOTES

A Letter of Languet about Sidney

THE three years spent on the Continent by the young Philip Sidney completed his education and formed his character to a degree not common among those who made the Grand Tour. In part this was due to his natural bent and talents; but scope and direction were given to his enlarging experience by the humanist scholar, Hubert Languet, who helped to open the doors of learning and diplomacy for him in Protestant Europe. One more piece of evidence concerning Languet's friendly interest in Sidney may be seen in a hitherto unpublished holograph letter recently added to the Harvard College Library through the generosity of Carleton R. Richmond, '09.

Languet was born in Burgundy in 1518 and educated in France and Italy, and as a young man he adopted the reformed religion as a protégé of Melanchthon. Like so many of the humanists of his day, his learning and interests went far beyond classical scholarship and theology, though he was deeply read in both. He traveled widely, and became a shrewd politician and judge of men and affairs, serving for many years as representative of Augustus, Elector of Saxony, first at Paris and later at Vienna. His official letters and reports are still esteemed as a source for the intricate diplomatic history of the period.¹ It was an age

¹ *Arcana seculi decimi sexti. Huberti Langueti . . . epistolae secretae ad principem suum Augustum* (Halle, 1699).

when the news of the world was disseminated through the correspondence of educated men. Among these Languet was one of the best and most prolific reporters.

He was in Paris in 1572, when Sidney first came to the Continent 'with three servants and four horses, etc., to remain the space of two years . . . for his attaining the knowledge of foreign languages' (in the words of the Queen's license).² Very probably they met in Paris, although no direct evidence survives. Both were there during the massacre of St Bartholomew. Sidney sheltered in the residence of Sir Francis Walsingham, the English ambassador; Languet, in the gravest danger as a prominent Huguenot, escaped through the intervention of the Bishop of Orleans.

From Paris Languet's diplomatic duties took him to Vienna. There Sidney joined him during the summer of 1573. For the remainder of his stay on the Continent, Vienna was virtually a base of operations for Sidney, and while in Vienna he lived in the same house as Languet.³ The young man ranged Europe from Italy to Poland, but always with the good advice — and firm Protestant admonitions — of the Huguenot scholar. We know more about their relations when they were separated than when

² Malcolm W. Wallace, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (Cambridge, 1915), p. 114.

³ Languet says, 'Ipse & ego viximus Viennae aliquandiu in iisdem aedibus,' *Arcana*, II, 291.

they were together, from the celebrated series of letters that passed between them. Languet's side of the correspondence was first published at Frankfurt in 1633, reprinted by the Elzeviers in 1646, re-edited by Lord Hailes in 1776, and extracted and translated (with the addition of Sidney's replies) by Stuart A. Pears in 1845. The first edition denominates them *Epistolae politicae et historicae*, and with good reason, for they are full of news seasoned by the observations of a man who combined moral fervor with great learning and wide experience. Of course the letters are invaluable to the biographer of Sidney, and beyond that they are nearly as good as Languet's official correspondence as a source for historical studies.

The new letter of Languet dates from the closing days of Sidney's Continental sojourn, when Languet was concerned that he have a safe and pleasant journey home. Official business had taken the scholar to Prague. From there he did his best to prepare the way for the young Englishman, dispatching letters to various friends and patrons on Sidney's route. Letters XLI and XLII of the published series⁴ are full of advice and the names of persons to whom Languet had addressed introductions: Andrew Wechel, the printer of Frankfurt (with whom Sidney had stayed on his way to Vienna); Graf Ludwig von Wittgenstein; Ursinus at Heidelberg; Lobetius at Strassburg; Bisetus at Basel; Achille de Harlay at Paris. The letter to Harlay, dated 12 March 1575, has survived and is printed in the

Epistolae as Letter XLIII.⁵ Another distinguished person whom Languet addressed on behalf of Sidney was Johann Crato von Crafftheim, whom Sidney had met in 1575 and whom he appears to have visited at Breslau.⁶ Besides these, Languet transmitted one of his official reports to Augustus, Elector of Saxony, through Sidney's hands. It was intended also to serve as an introduction for its bearer.⁷

Languet's letters to Sidney tell also that he was writing to a second friend at Frankfurt, a certain Dr Glauburg, and it is this letter from Languet to Glauburg that has now come to light and is here printed for the first time.

Clarissimo Iurisconsulto sapientia
& virtute præstantij Dñō Doct/
Ioannj Glauburgio Domino suo
& amico colendo—

Frankfurtj

S · P · D

Veniet iam ad vos Illustris & generosus adolescens Dñs Philippus Sydnæus Anglus natus patre in quo est magna virtus quj iam est prorex Hybernæ. Mater est soror VVaruicensis Comitis, & Robertj Comitis Lecestriæ, quorum hic videtur futurus hæres cum vterq3 careat liberis. Hunc fortunæ & natalium splendorem non tantj facio quantj admirandum eius ingeniũ & studium virtutis ad quam summa contentione fertur. Hæc credo tanta ornamenta reddent te cupidum ipsj gratificandj; sed si quid apud te possunt meæ preces, da obsecro operã vt aliquibus officijs beneuolentiam eius

⁴ Pp. 135-137. No addressee is named in the edition of 1633; in the Elzevier (1646) edition it is headed 'Ad D. Harlacum'; while Lord Hailes heads it 'Ludovico Comiti à Witgenstein.' The letter as printed contains no clue as to which addressee is correct.

⁵ J. F. A. Gillet, *Crato von Crafftheim und seine Freunde* (Frankfurt, 1860-61), II, 169.

⁶ *Arcana*, II, 74-76.

⁷ *Epistolae* (1633), pp. 129-135.

demerearis: nam eius amicitia forte poterit olim esse tibi aut tuis amicis vsui, cum vix fieri possit quin aliquando magnam auctoritatem consequatur in patria si Deus volet eum esse diu superstitem. Si opus fuerit ei pecunia, peto ut ex ea quam mihi debes, tantum ei des quantum a te postulabit. Quis sit hic rerum status poteris ex eo commodissime discere: tamen ut tibi percontandi occasionem præbeam, aliquid scribam: sed breuiter. Paulo ante quam moreretur Selimus Turcarum princeps, Imperator ab eo impetrauerat prorogationem induciarum in octo annos: in quam rem legati quos habuit Constantinopoli, multum laboris & pecuniæ toto sesquianno impenderant. Cum autem alterutrius principis morti soluantur induciæ, mortuo Selimo putabamus frustra laboratum esse in impetrandis inducijs, & laborem ac pecuniam nobis perijsse, quum præter plurimorum expectationem significatum est Imperatori hunc nouum Principem Amuratem concedere induciarum prorogationem iisdem plane conditionibus quibus a patre ante mortem concessa fuerat, & mittere ad Imperatorem primum suum interpretem natione Germanum, ut ab eo exigat approbationem conditionum quæ insertæ sunt inducijs. Venit huc ante octiduum Interpres, & nudiustertius mandata sua Imperatori exposuit. Est vir quantum conijcere licet, sexagenarius, egregia forma, & (ut aiunt) multarum linguarum peritus. Bohemi visi sunt ab aliquot annis Imperatoris aduentum valde expetere: sed vereor ne non tantum gaudij ipsis adferat quantum sperauerunt: nam postulat ab eis magnam summam pecuniæ ad dissoluendum æs alienum factum a Ferdinando Imperatore, & ad numeranda stipendia militibus qui ad fines Turcicos excubant. Sed hæc omnia tibi exponet generosus Dominus Sydnæus. Accepj herj literas a nostro Clusio in quibus petit ut te officiose salutem. Nactus est optimam conditionem. Stipendium annuum est quingentorum aureorum, & iam coepit eius eruditio & probitas in-

notescere Imperatori, qui cum ad se sæpe vocare solebat & de exoticis plantis cum eo colloqui: sed noster discessus ex vrbe Viennensi, hoc initium familiaritatis interturbauit. Vixit Clusius apud Aicholtium veterem tuum amicum, qui est vir optimus, & iisdem studijs delectatur quibus Clusius. Petij ab Illustrissimo meo principe ut fieret mihi ad vos excurrere: sed nullum accepj responsum ad meas literas. Bene vale & amicos saluta. Pragæ oct. die Mart. 1575

Tui obseruantissimus & amantissimus
Hubertus Languetus.

The letter may be translated:

To the most distinguished jurist, outstanding in wisdom and virtue, Master Doctor Johannes Glauburg, my master and honored friend, at Frankfurt

There will presently come to you an illustrious and noble youth, the Englishman, Master Philip Sidney, son of a most worthy father who is now Lord Deputy of Ireland. His mother is the sister of the Earl of Warwick, and of Robert Earl of Leicester, of whom he is heir-presumptive, as they are both childless. I do not consider this splendor of birth and fortune so much to be admired as his wit and his zeal for virtue, which he pursues with the greatest assiduity. Such great ornaments, I believe, will make you wish to oblige him; but if my prayers have any influence with you, assist him, I beg you, that you may deserve his favor in other matters: for his friendship may be useful to you and your friends in the future, since he will surely be given great authority in his own country, if God grants him long life. If he needs money, I wish you would give him as much as he asks for, out of what you owe me.

You will be able to learn of the state of affairs here very readily from him: however, that I may afford you a cue for questioning him, I shall write something:

but briefly. Shortly before the death of Selim, prince of the Turks, the Emperor had secured from him an eight-year extension of the truce: in which business the ambassadors whom he had at Constantinople expended much labor and money for a whole year and a half. Since, however, the truce might be ended by the death of either ruler, when Selim died we thought that we had labored in vain to secure it, and that our efforts and money had been wasted, when, contrary to most people's expectation, the Emperor was informed that the new ruler Murad would grant an extension of the truce on exactly the same terms that had been granted by his father before his death, and that he was sending to the Emperor his chief negotiator for the German nation, to obtain from him ratification of the terms contained in the truce. The negotiator arrived eight days ago, and the day before yesterday explained his commission to the Emperor. He is a man concerning whom there is much conjecture, in his sixties, of distinguished appearance, and (they say) expert in many tongues.

The Bohemians seemed for some years to be looking forward eagerly to the visit of the Emperor: but I am afraid he did not bring them as much joy as they had hoped: for he is demanding from them a large sum of money to pay off the debt incurred by the Emperor Ferdinand, and to pay the troops who keep watch on the Turkish border. But all this the noble Master Sidney will expound to you.

Yesterday I received a letter from our friend Clusius in which he asks me to greet you kindly. He has come into very comfortable circumstances. His annual income is five hundred gold pieces, and his learning and honesty are beginning to be known to the Emperor, who is accustomed frequently to summon him, and talk with him about exotic plants: but our departure from Vienna has interrupted this new intimacy.

Clusius is living with your old friend Aichholtz, who is an excellent man, and delights in the same studies as Clusius.

I have requested permission from my illustrious prince to visit you, but I have received no reply to my letter. Farewell, and greet my friends for me. At Prague, 8 March 1575

Your most respectful and affectionate
Hubert Languet.

The diplomatic news contained in Languet's letter is, as usual, succinct, factual, and enlivened with the detail to be expected from an intelligent observer. The current situation in central and eastern Europe stemmed from the failure of the Western powers to take advantage of the Turkish defeat at Lepanto in 1571. The Turks had rapidly rebuilt their fleet, and their depredations in the Mediterranean were scarcely diminished. The European nations had to negotiate separately with the Ottoman Empire since they seemed unable to act in concert. Therefore it was a matter for great relief in Vienna when Murad III volunteered to continue the truce so painstakingly arranged with his predecessor, Selim the Sot.

The distress of the Bohemians recorded by Languet was merely another stage in the gradual decline and disappearance of Bohemia as a national entity. This process had begun with the defeat and death of King Louis at the battle of Mohács in 1526. A further step came in 1547 when the Bohemian crown was declared hereditary in the house of Hapsburg. Bohemian patriots hoped to find in the visit of the Emperor Maximilian II some restoration or recognition of their identity as a nation. Instead, he brought new impositions to add to the

old as the fortunes of Bohemia continued to decline.

More interesting than these brief glimpses of current events are the personal matters which begin and end the letter. The terms of Languet's introduction of Sidney to Glauburg are very similar to those contained in his letters to Harlay and the Elector of Saxony. And they suggest an answer to a problem puzzling at first sight: why should the mature and learned Languet pay so much attention to the inexperienced young foreigner?

We may guess that Languet first decided to cultivate Sidney's acquaintance purely as a matter of policy, only to fall completely under the spell of the Englishman's charm and intellectual abilities. For there seems no reason to doubt that Sidney's powers far outstripped his years. Many voices attest his brilliance, and his own works remain to confirm their judgment. This is what Languet found when, with a typical Renaissance blending of idealism and worldly wisdom, he set out to influence a young man apparently destined to rank and importance solely on family grounds. Moreover, Sidney, who knew how to value lineage at its true worth, did not overvalue it; no mere whim directed him to place beneath his crest the motto, 'Vix ea nostra voco.' Not birth, but deeds, determine man's greatness; 'the ending end of all earthly learning, being verteous action . . .'⁸ So Languet tells Glauburg that he will be attracted by Sidney's personal attainments while remaining mindful of his family eminence.

The admonition to Dr Glauburg to

⁸ Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge, 1923), p. 12.

advance money to Sidney at need reflects the financial difficulties which were ever present through his life and which remained to plague his widow and father-in-law after his death. Income never caught up to expenditure, especially since Sidney was always open-handed and never really attempted to make ends meet. The extent of Languet's devotion to Sidney may be judged from this opening of his own pocket to the young man.

Languet's letter closes with an affectionate remembrance of two old friends, Dr Johann Aichholtz of Vienna and Charles de l'Escluse.⁹ Of these, the latter has a place in the history of botanic science as one of the earliest modern students of exotic plants, and also as the first successful propagator of the potato in Europe. His correspondence with other botanists of the day is well known, as is his *Rariorum plantarum historia* (1601). Through Crato von Crafftheim he had just received an imperial post at Vienna,¹⁰ and through Languet he had made the acquaintance of Sidney, with whom he corresponded in later years.¹¹ The friends Sidney made on the Continent, largely through the instrumentality of Hubert Languet, gave him points of contact with the great world invaluable to him as he took an increasingly active part in the events of his time.

WILLIAM H. BOND

⁹ On Aichholtz see *Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1929), I, 51; on his relations with de l'Escluse see Ernest Roze, *Charles de L'Escluse . . . sa biographie et sa correspondance* (Paris, 1899), p. 68.

¹⁰ Roze, p. 59.

¹¹ Wallace, pp. 141-142.

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