

Robert Watson to James III.

JN the "Calendar of Stuart Papers belonging to H.M. the King," iv. 562 (Hist. MSS. Com.), there is a letter editorially described as "A letter of Robert Watson,¹ a Quaker, to James III."² Enquiries as to the reliability of the endorsement have been made at the Public Record Office, and also at Windsor Castle. The King's Librarian, the Hon. J. W. Fortescue, M.V.O., writes :

"The letter of Robert Watson has no such heading or endorsement as that given in the Calendar ; but, besides the letter, there is a petition in the same hand, signed Robert Watson ; and this petition is endorsed in another, contemporary, hand, ' Quaker's petition to Jas. R.P.' "

A letter of Robert Watson, a Quaker, to James III. [1716 ?]

I am come in some misery & great difficulty to see thee here. I was forced to leave my family where I resided as a feuar to the Earl Marischal, where I kept a public house for several years, being brought low by losing two ships by the French during thy sister's war with them. Yet I was living very happy with my wife and six children till last winter we were made very uneasy by the Dutch and Swiss, who made themselves masters of our houses so long as we had ought within doors, my house being on the shore head where George's men kept guard in it and do so, for ought I know, to this day, so I could not go back to see my family since I was forced to go to England where I lurked three months, where I was curious to know thy friends by thy foes, and I think I always found four friends to one enemy. My last misfortune in England was like to be worse than my first, I being taken by a party of George's men and kept in prison 11 days at Rochester, where I was almost starved with hunger and cold, yet, two nights before I was to be sent to London, I got happily away and came to Calais and thence to Paris through an unknown tongue. Then I, wandering as a pilgrim, resolved to come and see thee. As I always said, although thou differ a little from the Church of England in thy worship of God, it is very hard that a king cannot have the freedom which the meanest subject would wish to have. It shall be sore against my will to be chargeable to thee, though my sore travel has made me very low and not very well at present, yet it will not go out of my heart that the Lord of heaven and earth has a way laid out to bring thee to thine own yet unknown to man, and that I will see thee established in the throne of thy ancestors.

¹ The name has not been found among Scottish records in D.

² James Francis Edward Stuart (1688-1766), the "Old Pretender," son of James II. and Mary of Modena.