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[Letters Patent] Irish Deed Bearing Portraits of James I, His Son Charles Prince of Wales, and His Late Wife Anne of Denmark

In Latin and English, illuminated manuscript on parchment

Dublin, dated November 12, 1624, completed in 1625

*One sheet of parchment, script and decoration in pen-and-ink (justification 510 × 483 mm.), written in 48 long lines, the first line in a greatly enlarged Textura in black ink, lines 2-48 in a clear Gothic hand with initial words of clauses in a slightly enlarged Textura, all in dark brown ink and ruled with pale brown ink, ILLUMINATED BORDER, 3-sided, containing coats of arms and other figures, in black ink with gold, painted in black, red, blue, green, brown, and white, with an ILLUMINATED COAT OF ARMS on dorse, in gold, blue, red, and black, pierced at lower border where the Great Seal was suspended (now lost), plica unfolded with lingering impression marks from seal cord, holes along plica fold (no loss of text), overall dust-staining, creasing where folded, some rubbing and smudging, some show-through from coat of arms on dorse, minor tears at edges. Dimensions c.700 × 780 mm.*

This is a very attractive illuminated example of an exceptionally large letters patent of James I and IV of Scotland, England, and Wales, creating Thomas 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Cromwell, Viscount Lecale. Produced by the Irish Chancery in 1624, it is signed at the foot by Francis Edgeworth, Clerk of the Hanaper, and illuminated with three dense borders and an added coat of arms on the reverse (or dorse). Formally copied, often illuminated, royal documents granting Irish titles were a tradition into the eighteenth century, with many surviving in institutional repositories and private collections.

## PROVENANCE

1. Manuscript copied in Dublin, dated November 12, 1624, the motto surrounding the King's head in his portrait bears the date 1625, suggesting that the intricate decoration was not completed until the following year.
2. Two inscriptions at dorse in 17<sup>th</sup>-century hands: in light brown ink, "34 A pattent of honor for my viscountshipe," likely by the hand of Thomas Cromwell; and in dark brown ink, "<illegible> 162A The 22<sup>d</sup> of King James the first <illegible> for the honour of Viscount Lecale Thomas Lord Cromwell & the heires Male of his body." A third inscription is now illegible (also at dorse on unfolded plica, within a discolored lozenge left by the cords that once affixed the Great Seal, which is now missing).

## TEXT

Incipit, "Jacobus Dei gratia Anglie Scotii Francie et Hibernie Rex fidei Defensor etc. Archiepiscopis Ducibus Marchionibus Comitibus Vicecomitibus Episcopis Baronibus Militibus Prepolitibus Liberis hominibus ac omnibus aliis ministris et subditis nostris quibuscunque ad quos ... Deputat nostro generali Regni nostri hibernie Apud Dublin duodecimo die Novembris anno Regni nostri Anglie Francie et Hibernie vicesimo secundo et Scotie Quinquagesimo octavo Edgworthe".

This is a letters patent, a type of legal instrument in the form of a published written order issued by a monarch granting an office or status to a person. In this case King James I and IV of Scotland, England, and Wales, creates Thomas Cromwell Viscount Lecale. It is signed at the foot by Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper, Francis Edgeworth.

## ILLUSTRATION

Our document boasts three decorative borders (at head and both sides). Along its top edge, we find a historiated initial containing a portrait of James I, along with portraits of Charles, Prince of Wales, and James' late consort, Anne of Denmark. The King's portrait shows him head and shoulders, crowned and clad in state robes, with an elaborate ruff and jeweled collar, against a foliate background with the words "Posui Deum adiutorem meum" [I have appointed God as my helper] "ano. Dom. 1625" encircling his head. The portrait derives from Paul van Somer's full-length state paintings of this period (ours being in reverse, indicating that it was taken from an engraving). Centered in the upper border are the Royal arms beneath the letters "I.R.," with lion and unicorn supporters, and flanked by angels bearing standards. To the left of this central panel sits the portrait of Prince Charles, showing him three-quarter-length, bearing the staff of office with Prince of Wales feathers and an eagle to his right; above him stretches a quote from Isaiah "Arise ye princes, anoint the shield." To the right of the central panel sits the portrait of the late Queen Anne of Denmark, depicted in three-quarter length, next to her hatchment and a bird of prey, against a stippled background decorated with Tudor roses.

Descending down the left border, below the King's portrait, are three panels: the first depicting a knight in plate armor painted with the cross of St George; standing amidst flowers, he is accompanied by a biblical quotation: "The grasse withereth, the floure fadeth but the worde of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8). Each of the two panels underneath him bears an elaborate coat of arms with crest and supporters – the lowermost likely those of Sir Francis Blundell (1579-1625), 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet of Edenderry (created 1620), Surveyor General of Ireland from 1609, and Remembrancer for Irish Affairs, 1617-1622 (Davidson and Sgroi, 2010).

Descending down the right border are three further panels, the topmost depicting the Duke of Brunswick in armor, astride a horse, carrying a shield and pennant. Beneath him stretches another biblical quotation – "They that waite upon the Lorde shall renew their strength: they shall lift up the wings as the eagles" – along with two crossed anchors and a pennant inscribed with the motto "JE MAINTENDRAY." Below this panel sit two additional coats of arms, with crests and supporters, the bottommost belonging to St John's College, Oxford.

The dorse (or reverse) of the document is ornamented with the large illuminated coat of arms of Thomas Cromwell, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Cromwell – *Quarterly per fess indented Or and Azure, four lions passant counterchanged* – surmounted by a helmet topped with a golden pelican vulning her breast, and surrounded by ermine, the whole supported by two unicorns, Gules, winged Or. A contemporary certificate of enrolment stretches beneath the arms, in dark brown ink, along with annotations in lighter brown ink (see Provenance above).

The beneficiary of this grant, Thomas Cromwell (1594-1653), fourth Baron Cromwell, descendant of Henry VIII's eponymous minister, served in a military capacity in Ireland. He was created Viscount Lecale, as shown here, in November 1624. In 1625, Cromwell was given command of a regiment in Ernest van Mansfeld's abortive expedition to the Palatinate, raising men in his wife's lands in Staffordshire. A staunch supporter of the Stuart monarchy, he

commanded a regiment of horses in the civil war. His reward came in April 1645 when he was created first Earl of Ardglass. After the war, Parliament fined him £460 for his commitment to the royalist cause, prompting him to retire to the old family estates in Rutland; he died some time before March 26, 1653 at Tickencote (Grummitt, 2008; Lunney, 2009).

Our deed is signed at foot, as enrolled, by Francis Edgeworth, Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper in the Irish Chancery, who held the position jointly with Sir John King until October 1627 (McCormack, 2009; Goodwin, 2008). Clerks of the Hanaper – an office ostensibly named for the hamper in which chancery documents or monies received were stored – were tasked with sealing and issuing writs under the Great Seal (The National Archives; Scargill-Bird, 1891, p. xiii).

James VI and I (James Charles Stuart, June 19, 1566-March 27, 1625) was King of Scotland as James IV from July 24, 1567 and King of England and Ireland as James I from the union of the Scottish and English crowns on March 24, 1603 until his death in 1625. The son of Mary, Queen of Scots, and a great-great-grandson of Henry VII, King of England and Lord of Ireland, he was thus a potential successor to all three thrones. His period of rule over all three kingdoms for twenty-two years is known as the Jacobean era. His wife, Anne of Denmark (December 2, 1574-March 2, 1619) was a Danish princess, daughter of King Frederick II of Denmark, who married James in proxy, because the latter needed a royal match to preserve his line. Nonetheless, she is said to have been much in love with James, whom she predeceased (Wormald, 2014).

Our letters patent sits within a long tradition of marking English royal grants to individuals, including grants of peerages, with elaborately produced display documents. Here, in the Irish context, the practice was deployed as yet another component of English efforts to subdue and control Ireland.

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