Drummer Major James Spens: Letters from a Common Soldier Abroad, 1617-1632
Alexia Grosjean, Steve Murdoch and Siobhan Talbott

The letters of Drummer Major James Spens were first identified by Mr Archibald Duncan of Pittenweem in 1950 as part of his project to translate the diplomatic correspondence of Sir James Spens of Wormiston.1 Wormiston served as both the British ambassador to Sweden and a general in the Swedish army. Duncan carefully sifted out 12 letters which had been misidentified as belonging to the ambassador, and compiled his evidence for so doing in a three page memorandum which now sits alongside the corpus in the National Records of Scotland.2 The memorandum focusses on why the letters cannot be those of Wormiston and Duncan’s interest in them ended there. However, to scholars of early modern Scotland, and particularly of Scottish military service abroad, these letters represent a unique find – a series of letters by a common soldier covering a fifteen-year period of service.

The letters relate to the author’s unspecified role in the garrison of ‘Dewbruch’, which Duncan believed might be Dewsbury in West Yorkshire. However, the true location of the garrison is in Doesburg in Gelderland (The Netherlands).3 Spens’s first four letters allow us to deduce that there was a Scottish community near Doesburgh which included family friends such as Thomas Aikin, John Wilson and his wife, and at least two of his relatives including his mother’s sister and her husband. It is possible that Spens learned of the opportunity to serve in the garrison either through these individuals or from members of the Scottish or English brigades serving in the Dutch Republic. English forces had served there intermittently since the end of the sixteenth century onwards and, in their correspondence home, officers variously recorded the town name as Dewburgh, Dewburrie, Diuborrow and Diuborroe. Evidence for the fact that it is Doesburg and not Dewsbury comes from the letters themselves. Spens notes that the garrison he is stationed in is 100 Scots miles from their landing place.4 But he notes that this distance was further than one John Fairlie, a friend in Gelderland, said it would be.5 The town of circa 2000 inhabitants supported a garrison throughout the period of the Dutch Eighty Years’ War (1568-1648).6 Moreover, we can identify the units of the Scots-Dutch brigade present in Gelderland down to company level. Two companies of 70 men drawn from Colonel William Brog’s regiment served there in 1617 when Spens arrived – those of captains Andrew Donaldson and Philip Mowbury.7 Spens’s letters only

1 Duncan’s translations into English of James Spens of Wormiston’s letters were never published but they can be found in Uppsala University Library, 'The Diplomatic Correspondence of Sir James Spens of Wormiston', Manuscript E379d. The letters to the Swedish Chancellor and Regent, Axel Oxenstierna, have been published in their original languages in Arne Jönsson (ed.) Rikskanslern Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevväxling. Senare avdelning, trettonde bandet: Brev från Letters James Spens och Jan Rutgers (Stockholm, 2007), pp.23-274.
3 Spens variously spells this place name Dewbruch, Dewbrig and Dewburgh. The letters themselves appear on the catalogue of the National Records of Scotland as being sent from Doesburg. We also thank Marcella Mulder and Dr Griet Vermeesch for their help in confirming the location of the garrison.
4 One Scots mile is equivalent of 1.13 English miles or 1.81 kilometers. See the conversion chart in V. Enthoven, S. Murdoch and E. Williamson (eds.), The Navigator: The Log of John Anderson. VOC Pilot-Major, 1640-1643 (Leiden, 2010), p.xvi.
5 RH9/2/232: James Spens to his sister, Agnes Walker, Doesburg, 30 August 1617.
7 J. Ferguson (ed.), Papers Illustrating the History of the Scots Brigade in the Service of the United Netherlands, 1572–1872, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1899–1901), vol. 1, pp. 229, 72. 3. One John (Jan) Spens later served as chamberlain to the
enable us to identify one comrade in arms in Dutch service, merely identified as the son of John Waschop (Wauchop). However, this group of letters ends in 1619 and it seems he may have returned to Scotland thereafter. The first four letters do not mention a wife, whereas those from 1628 onwards do. Moreover, in one of his final letters, dated 1632, Spens notes that he had been out of Scotland for eight years. This gives us a window from roughly 1620-1624 during which he was in Scotland, got married and had children, including his son William Spens.

The 1624 date of interest as it coincides with James Spens of Wormiston’s permission to raise a new levy in Scotland for Sweden. A perusal of the muster-roll of the first contingents who arrived in service that year show that James Spens served as a ‘tambour’ (drummer) not only in the regiment of his namesake, but in the colonel’s own company. The unit, which Spens called the regiment of ‘Crouner Spens’, was wholly Scottish at this juncture. Once again then, Spens served alongside fellow Scots overseas including the colonel’s son, a sergeant also called James Spens. That Spens served in the regiment of his more senior namesakes is probably not coincident. In recent research on the subject of military motivations, kith and kin relations have proved to be compelling as a primary reason for serving in a particular regiment. Indeed by 1626, Wormiston’s regiment included James Spens (colonel), James Spens (the colonel’s son), James Spens (the drummer) and James Spens (a musketeer). Serving alongside this group was Alexander Spens, who was also a drummer and perhaps drummer Spens’s brother who he noted as having died in Germany in 1631.

This particular corpus of letters is unique in that it is largely devoid of the ‘big cause’ motivations for enlistment into the military. This does not mean that Spens’s other letters did not mention such matters, or that he may not have written about them to a different group of recipients. Nevertheless, such causes are not recorded here. The information we do have shows us that Spens did not feel compelled to serve according to a particular ideology, but rather chose military service as an available occupation. He mentions to his wife several times that if she knew of any work available to him in Scotland he would rather leave service and return to take up such work to be with his family. He does mention ‘God’s Cause’, but not in reference to his soldiering or the Protestant League, rather as a point of honour with regard to a lady he feels he let down by being in her company when she received an offence. While many Scots at officer level mention the cause of Elizabeth Stuart (the Queen of Bohemia and daughter of James VI & I) as a primary motivation for service, Spens is silent on the subject. Similarly, Spens says nothing of the pursuit of money in a mercenary sense. In the opinion of Colonel Robert Monro, ‘such Souldiers to command were my

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choice, that cared not for gold nor money, but for credit’.  

When Spens wrote home to his parents after leaving the Swedish army for Dutch East India service (VOC), he wrote of his motivations similarly; that ‘I would not wish for gold’, but rather he talked of ‘the goodness that I find by travelling and visiting foreign countries’.  

Whatever drove Spens to enlist in Sweden, he says little about the grander ambitions of Gustav II Adolf, describing the move into Germany as part of the Swedish campaign against the Habsburgs with the single line ‘we ar to remow utin yis cuntrie presentlie to Duchland quhar ye kings majestie is for he hes greit weir yer’. Moreover, it was while ‘the Lion of the North’ was conducting his campaigns that Spens opted to leave Swedish service. This was not due to an objection to the campaign, but as a way of escaping the personal tragedy of the loss of his wife, Elizabeth, during childbirth. Having repeatedly sent her letters badgering her to come and join him in Riga, Spens felt that many would think he had been unkind to her and been responsible for her death. He thus decided on a self-imposed exile to last seven years. After receiving permission to leave the regiment he removed himself to Amsterdam where, with his old friend George Borthwick, he enlisted for a seven-year tour to the East Indies as a soldier in the VOC:

I my selff hes taikin ane Jurnay in hand that non of my kin ever hes tain ye Lyk in hand; qulik is to the eist ingies qulik I am taik on for sevin ʒeirs; fyve ʒeirs in the Land and ane ʒeir cuming and ane ʒeir going qulik I hop in Jesus chryst yat it sall be the best Jurnay yat ever I took in hand to ye glorie of god and yo confortis

Archibald Duncan suggested that the rank of ‘drummer major’ did not exist within the Swedish army, but it certainly existed in Scottish regiments of the period. In a muster of the Army of the Solemn League and Covenant in England in 1646, most regiments of foot contained a cohort of drummers, usually two per company. Specifically in Colonel Arthur Erskine’s regiment we find John Henderson recorded as ‘Drummer Major’ for Erskine’s own company, along with two other drummers. In the other companies of the same regiment the muster-roll records another eight ‘drummers’ equaling 11 in total. From this we can confidently infer that ‘drummer-major’ was the senior drummer in a regiment responsible for the collective drum cohort in some regiments. As ‘General of British’ in Swedish service it seems that James Spens of Wormiston continued to employ Scottish ranking structures, including the regimental drummers as senior to ordinary

17 Monro, His Expedition, vol.1, p. 73. Monro returns to this point several times noting that the best pike-men ‘remaine standing firme with their Officers, guarding them and their Colours, as being worthy the glorious name of brave Souldiers, preferring vertue before the love of gold, that vanisheth while virtue remaineth’. Monro, Expedition, II, p. 37.
18 RH9/2/242: James Spens to his father and mother, Guinea Coast, 23 February 1632.
19 RH9/2/240: James Spens to his father and mother, Agnes Walker, Riga, 1630.
20 RH9/2/240: James Spens to his father and mother, Agnes Walker, Riga, 1630.
21 RH9/2/241: James Spens to his father and mother, Amsterdam, 12 November 1631
22 A George Borthwick served as a musketeer in the same regiment as James Spens. See KrA/0022/1629/22 (1629), f.102.. James Spens’ Regiment, Muster, 1629.
23 RH9/2/241: James Spens to his father and mother, Amsterdam, 12 November 1631. For the context of Scots serving in the East Indies in this period see Enthoven, Murdoch and Williamson, The Navigator, pp.87-117
24 We thank Dr Bjorn Asker at The Swedish National Archives for confirming this to be the case.
26 The National Archives at Kew, SP 41/2, ‘Muster Rolls of the Scots’ Army in England', January 1645/6, ff.3-4
drummers. Indeed, having enlisted as a ‘tambour’, we find Spens recorded in the Swedish muster-roll of 1626 with the rank clearly listed as Drummer-Major. When the regiment reached full strength (11 companies), there were no less than 25 drummers in the regiment. The role of these men was important; they were often used to indicate the presence of recruiters in a domestic context, and once in the field they could be used as signalers. During the Thirty Years’ War, Scottish drummers perfected the ‘Scots March’, a particular drum beat used by the Scottish regiments to marshal troops and lead them into battle. Colonel Robert Monro recorded an instance when it was even imitated by German regiments to try to frighten their enemy, giving credence to its effectiveness.

Spens’s letters tell us much about the culture of communication for the common Scottish soldier and his correspondence reveals the ways the letters were to be used. They were to be read aloud to family and then given sight of to his friends. Although often addressed to his mother, sub-sections are included that directly addressed his siblings or father. He took care to add additional recipients in case of the failure of delivery. Moreover, this small parcel of 12 letters is merely the tip of a sadly now lost mountain of mail. Spens informs us of 20 letters sent in a single year to his wife alone, as well as indicating throughout that his other friends were in constant written communication with home. Several of these letters reveal that the soldiers would each act as couriers for bundles of correspondence when the opportunity arose. Spens himself served as a courier for James Hanna, albeit he unfortunately lost the bundle entrusted to him to a thief. Despite the relative paucity of this corpus, the surviving letters illustrate the common soldier’s hopes, fears and even separation anxiety.

The frequent mention of women in the letters shows Spens’s concern for female kith, kin and friends alike. The most potent of these letters are a series of three in which he berates his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, for not writing to him often enough, or worse, being unjust to him when she did. Despite his obvious fury at Elizabeth’s failure to keep in touch, he consistently protests his love for her and eventually appears to have briefly returned to Scotland before bringing her with him to Riga in 1629. This involved a treacherous journey during which his kinsman, James Spens of Wormiston, supported him for some 15 weeks in Stockholm after they were robbed. This common soldier also wrote to his mother and sister, often providing support in difficult situations in which

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27 In other cases in Sweden we find senior drummers identified in this way. See for example the regiments of James Ramsay in 1629 and John Meldrum in 1630. KrA/0022/1629/10, f.339 and KrA/0022/1630/23 f.274 respectively.
28 KrA/0022/1626/3 (1626), f.152. James Spens’ Regiment, Muster, 1626. There is no ambiguity here as the muster-roll is recorded in Scots not Swedish.
29 KrA/0022/1629/22 (1629), ff.80-114. James Spens’ Regiment, Muster, 1629. Interestingly, James Spens does not appear on this muster from October 1629. We can deduce that it was around this period he returned to Scotland to meet with Elizabeth Baillie.
31 M. Monro, His Expedition, II, pp.65, 112.
32 RH9/2:235: James Spens to his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, Riga, 1 October 1628.
33 RH9/2:238: James Spens & Elizabeth Baillie to Agnes Walker, Riga 29 May [1629 or 1630]. It is possible these letters were destined for Sergeant Robert Hanna who enlisted into the same regiment as Spens in 1624. See KrA/0022/1624/8 (1624), f.264. James Spens’ Regiment, Muster, 1624.
35 RH9/2:235-237: James Spens to his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, Riga 1 October to 1 November 1628.
36 RH9/2:238: James Spens and Elizabeth Baillie to his mother, Agnes Walker, Riga, 29 May (1629 or 1630).
they found themselves and advising on a number of matters from personal relations to business transactions. For example, he instructed his sister not to trust John Farlie, neither in the buying or selling of land.\(^37\) He consoled his mother when let down in her affairs by both his brother and his father at various times.\(^38\) He never forgot his former servant Janet Richisone whom he mentions in three separate letters. Along with his numerous greetings to his ‘gossip’ (Godfather), William Cuthbertson, he also sent regards to his ‘cumor’ (Godmother) Margaret Douglas.\(^39\) His fictive relationship to the Douglas family is interesting, not least as Spens sent news of his friend Robert Douglas home to Douglas’s wife.\(^40\) In a final mention of women who were not (yet) relations, Spens for all his love of travel and the exotic, stated emphatically after his wife had died that he would not take another spouse of any nationality but his own: ‘for I hop not to marie ane wyff till I get a Scots woman’.\(^41\) This was despite having just embarked on a seven-year journey which he knew may cost him his life.

It is in this condition that we lose sight of James Spens from the historical record. He was emphatic that he would try to return to see his parents again, while observing this might not be God’s plan for either him or them. Although his fate remains uncertain for the moment, it is in his surviving letters that Spens has perhaps played his most significant role by providing a rare glimpse into a common soldier’s most personal concerns as he traversed the globe. In so doing he reminds us that the personal relationships and social networks employed in his age were not simply the preserve of the rich and famous with whom we are more familiar.

Editorial Practice

We have left the text in its original language, Scots. Where Spens uses a word for which the equivalent in English is not obvious, we have given an English translation in the footnote. All translations are taken from the Dictionary of the Scots Language, available at: http://www.dsl.ac.uk/

Punctuation and capitalisation

The script James Spens uses is sometimes unclear and quite inconsistent, particularly with regard to spelling. Moreover, he eschews the use of punctuation throughout his letters; we have introduced punctuation, most notably adding semi-colons to help the reader get a sense of the intended clauses. Similarly, although we have retained Spens’s own spelling for proper names, we have added capitalization. There are places throughout the text where Spens introduces capital letters for no apparent reason; we have left these visible.

Spelling

In the word ‘ʒeires’, the first letter represents the Scottish ‘yogh’. This letter-form is common to Middle Scots and represents a sound somewhere between ‘J’ and ‘Y’ (in Middle English ‘G’ and

\(^37\) RH9/2/232: James Spens to his sister, Agnes Walker, Doesburg, 30 August 1617.
\(^38\) RH9/2/231: James Spens to his mother, Agnes Walker, Doesburg, 30 August 1617 and n.d. 1619. – Should we change all ‘no dates’ to ‘n.d.’ or vice-versa to maintain consistency?
\(^39\) RH9/2/238: James Spens and Elizabeth Baillie to his mother, Agnes Walker, Riga, 29 May (1629 or 1630).
\(^40\) RH9/2/236: James Spens to his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, Riga, 1 October 1628. Robert Douglas appears in the regiment as a musketeer in 1626. See KrA/0022/1626/3 (1626), f.154. James Spens’ Regiment, Muster, 1626.
\(^41\) RH9/2/239: James Spens to his mother, Agnes Walker, Riga, no date.
‘Y’). By the seventeenth century the use of ‘ʒ’ for the ‘Y’ sound is said to have been obsolete except for fossilized occurrences in a limited number of words such as Cappercailʒe ....’. However, Spens uses it correctly both at the start of some words, but also in the middle of others including the surname of his wife, Elizabeth Baillʒie. Thus the consistent use of the letter-form here by Spens should be of lexicographical interest to scholars of the Scots language.

In Older Scots the letters ‘quh’ are used to describe the equivalent of ‘wh’ in English. The reason for the difference comes from the Scottish double-sounded pronunciation – the breathed velar plosive followed by the voiced lip-back fricative. The symbol qu, adopted from French spelling in words of Romance origin gradually replaced the Old English cw in native words also. It remained in use in formal Scottish documents until the eighteenth century when English began to replace Scots as the language of state.

In the word ‘yat’, the first letter represents the ‘thorn’ (þ) which was used in Old and Middle English as a form of ‘th’. In Middle Scots handwriting it is usually identical to the letter ‘y’. We have retained the ‘y’ to distinguish cases in which the author uses ‘y’ from the times when he uses ‘th’. By so doing we also follow a change in the author’s own usage where in his early letters Spens writes ‘moyer’ (m0þer) for mother, though later alters this to the more modern spelling. Similarly, Spens sometimes renders the ‘th’ at the end of a word as an ‘f’ (‘helf’ instead of ‘health’), representing a labialization more often heard in speech than seen written down.

In several places Spens uses the sharp S ‘ß’ to represent a double ‘s’. Where he as used ‘ß’ we have retained it though his use of it is, again, inconsistent. Sometimes Spens includes both a second s and ß. Where ‘sß’ is the case, we have indicated only the intended ‘ß’.

**Expansions**

There are a number of instances of contractions in this corpus of letters. Where expansions have been made, italics have been used to indicate them; e.g. ‘qlk’ has been expanded to ‘quhilk’ (which) and ‘qn’ to ‘quhan’ (when) etc.

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43 For more see William Grant et al. (eds.), *The Scottish National Dictionary*, 10 vols. (Edinburgh, 1931-76), VII, p. 293.
The Letters

RH9/2/231: James Spens to his mother and father, Doesburg, 30 August 1617

1. To my loving moyer;\(^44\) after my most hertlie comandationis I am to
2. let ʒow to wit yat I am [in] gude helf praisid be god at yis present and let
3. ʒow to wit yat I haif resavit fra Wm Robertsone\(^45\) sex quarters and ane
4. halif of grin Ingliß cloß; tua pair of pairlie hans and tua pair planis;
5. tua pair of pairlie napcinis and tua pair plane with ane angle of gold
6. with ane pair of plydis; and thanks hertlie for thame; and I wryt to
7. ʒow for no plydis but to hir broyer scho wald no burdin ʒow so sair
8. at yis tyme becaus ʒe have annuch adoo at this tyme; bot ʒit
9. I thank ʒow hertlie for thame and for yo
10. ʒow for no plydis but to hir broyer scho wald no burdin ʒow so sair
11. I wad wis to god yə at this tyme to sho wad doe his diligens tο ʒow
12. and to ye thing yat he promeist me\(^47\) befoir god to my moyer loving;
13. ʒe haif done to me abone yo
14. and I here nothing but scho is ane onist woman yat feir god
15. and uprychtlie; and it wonder me broyer yat he maid ʒour promeist afore
16. god and does it not; and does not ʒour onist dew to hir yerfore for feir
17. god and doe ʒat apertein to ye dewtie of god; my hertlie comandationis
18. to ʒow and yours husband; Thomas Aitin mak his hertlie comand
19. -ationis to ʒow moyer; thank be to god I am in gude helf; praisd
20. be god but sen your sister come heir I bein verie seik; I am a litil
21. bettir at yis present; I have resavit ane suord loving moyer; ye blissing
22. of the lord ye Jesus Chryst be with ʒow nicht and day and loving
23. moyer if ever god mak me ane man I sall remember on ʒow
24. moyer; my blissing be with ʒow nicht and day moyer; comand me to John Wiliamsone
25. and his bedfellow; comand me to Androw Brucht and his bedfellow;
26. comand me to Thomas Mairschell and his moyer; so I rest with ʒow;
27. cometh ʒow to god from Dewbruch ye ye penilt of August
28. ye penilt day of August
29. To my loving moyer; yis be deleyvert to Agnes Walker
30. the penilt of August
31. James Spens your sone
32. 1617 1617
33. Thomas Aitin makis his hertlie comandationis to ʒow loving moyer; mak my hertlie
    comandationis and he is verie weill to all frends in ye Cannongait

(reverse)
To my loving father; this be deleyverit in Edinburgh to James Spens

\(^44\) Initially, as here, Spens uses the thorn (þ) to represent the ‘th’ sound in ‘mother’. In his later letters Spens shifts practice and uses ‘th’.
\(^45\) The identity of this William Robertson and the other people mentioned in this letter are yet to be established.
\(^46\) Spens leaves a gap between after ‘hop’ and ‘in’.
\(^47\) Perhaps crossed through?
RH9/2/232: James Spens to his sister, Agnes Walker, Doesburg, 30 August 1617

1. To my loving sister; my hertlie commandationnis be rembrit to 30w quhilk;49 I thoche50  
2. gude to wryt to hir quhilk; our wayeg was baif deir and coustlie quhilk it not as John Fairlie  
3. speik it is in Gilderland quhilk; it is ane hundreth Scotis mylis fra our landing place  
4. quhilk we war ar we cam to our Jurna end; we tent ane mark of everie peis  
5. of gold of our quhyt silver we lost; silver quhilk com to thrie pund of the schanging  
6. of our money quhilk; I have nea freind bot John Wilsone and his wyf in yis land  
7. tak so greit cair of me and my bedfellow quhilk; and plis god at ye  
8. spring yey will be ye in Scotland quhilk I assure 30w I pray 30w for;  
9. ye love of god intertine tyme as thir intertine ws and your sone; and pray yat  
10. 3e speik not your mynd to John Fairlie; neither52 of bying or syling of the land;  
11. and be not so appin of your pirls as 3e haif benn befor; trust him no  
12. for he hes not sein your sone at all quhilk quhilk; I requisit 30w most  
13. ernistlie till send me thrie ell of gray for to be ane Jup to ly by ye  
14. Gard with in winter; and I sall send 30w ane sten of lint or tua with  
15. your gude sister quhilk; I sie nothing in yis companie bot plane hardnes  
16. quhilk; your sister tak mobile cair and dolar54 and think so lang to have  
17. word of 30w xxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx  
18. and pray 30w to have mynd of Besie Ruyirfurd; my comdat  
19. -ionnis be Remembrit to 30w and your sone, and your sister make your hertlie  
20. comandationis to 30u and mak my hertlie hertlie commandations  
21. to James Spens induellar in Edinburgh; mak my hertlie comandat  
22. -ionis to Androw Bruch and to his bedfellow and to John Williamso  
23. -ne and his wyf, and to Elspith Gudrie and hir dochter and to  
24. John Sandis and his wyf, and to Georg Durie and his wyf  
25. quhilk; Jonne Waschop eldest sone is in ye garischin quher we ar no  
26. and pray 30w to tak of hiz awin to bestow up hiz self your55 comandations;  
27. we know yat 3e ar tum handit at this tyme no farder bot cometh 30w  
28. to god be due comandationis; and your sister be remembrit and your sone  
29. sone; comith 30w be god frome Dewbrig; Jonne Waschop sone mak his hertlie  
30. comandations to yow xxxxxxxxxx [and] pray  
31. desere 30w to ga to my ladie and tell hir of the thrie pund and get it  
32. or let me ladie gait me thrie ell of gray for it  
33. James Spens; mak my hertlie comandations to a gud neibris  
34. the penilt of August

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48 The letter is undated other than “penilt of August”. As with his first letter he signs this one from ‘Dewbrig’ and was probably written at the same time as the one to his parents. He also addresses them in this letter.  
49 In this letter Spens appears to be using quhilk (which) as a form of punctuation. Its presence here renders the letter awkward to read as he uses the same work correctly, often on close proximity.  
50 Gelderland in the Netherlands.  
51 The Scots word here is the preposition ‘er/ere/or’ which would be rendered in English as ‘before’.  
52 The final letter is unclear, but must be an ‘r’ in this context.  
53 The Scots word ‘Jup’ usually refers to a woman’s jacket, though it is clear from the context that Spens intends it here for his own use.  
54 Spens here seems to be meaning "movable geir and money".  
55 Unclear here due to over-written text.  
56 ‘Tum handit’ in English would be with ‘empty handed’ and is an idiom meaning busy.
PS1: and I pray you loving moyer to send me ane peis of silver to mr [.blsn?]; and I pray to send me with [...] as I wryt for it; for I have resavit ye peis of gold for thy delyverit the peis of gold to my father sister

PS2: Send no more geir for I sie the luv tenant and his wyf and they ar so gridi of the things that I misler I sall send ane halill sark till yey come; and pray *** tak in care for thanks be god we ar in gud helf [...] sie be [...] quher nether your gud broyer your [...] thar sister [...] the warnin

(reverse)

1. Sister I let now to wit yat I am weill in helth praysid [be God]
2. and deseris ye lyk of now and prayis now with the first [occasi]
3. -oin yat 3e send word quhow 3e doe quhilk; I think to [...]
4. to wit quhilk 3e deseryr me tell send 3ow word qhow...]
5. is quhilk I think he ryt hardier handlid58 and wad abo...]
6. ye war war not luvtenant Aitin I had not plais...]
7. Luvtenant Aitin had givin me of my awn pay quhilk the g[ei]r
8. 3e send hes done me litill gud at yis present; I wald [...]
9. 3e had bocht me ane dublit your self for I have gotin [...]
10. but tua sarks and ane hat of it; I never said ware and ha[ve]
11. gotin ane dublit of it deseryng 3ow loving moyer yat 3e sa...]
12. letar ane peiß of silver quhat pleiß 3ow if 3e may get it in [...]
13. cam tuk ye drum; weill I thank god mak my hertlie hert[lie]
14. comandationns to your moyer and my fayer comith now to G[od]
15. and I pray yow yat 3e doe sell ye land and let not Mr Fa[irlie]
16. begyl 3ow; and I pray 3ow moyer yat 3e send me nothing [but]
17. ane litil thing to send my self at noboyey wit as I send fr...]
18. and doe not ane nicht the ho...]
19. bot ane and awin w...]
20. [...]

(also reverse)

To heis loving sister Agnes Walker; thes be dellyferit in the Canongait

57 It is not clear what Spens means in the clause of the sentence “if I misler I sall send”.
58 Meaning roughly handled. The ‘d’ ending in Scots is often silent rendering ‘hand’ as ‘haun’ etc.
RH9/2/233; James Spens to his father, James Spens, Doesburg, 1618

1. To my loving father; efter my maist hairtlie command
2. -ationis I am to lat 3ow to wit that I am hail and feir\(^{59}\)
3. praised be to god at this present; and desiring ye
4. lyke of 3ow; and I am to lat 3ow to wit your sister
5. is weill in helth praisid be god at yis present
6. tyme; and your gud brother maks maks [sic.] ye hartlie hairtlie [sic.]
7. comadationns to 3ow and lat 3ow to wit yat they ar weill
8. in helth praisid be to god at yis present tyme;
9. yerfore loving father I wald desire [3ow] maist
10. ernistlie to send me word of your hel[th] an[d] estait
11. and how zay ar and I am glad off your weilffeir
12. and yerfore loving father I wal[d] [d]esere
13. 3ow maist ernistlie to mak my hairtlie [co]mandations
14. to my Brother Art[c]hie Spens; loving father I wald
15. desire 3ow to send me over sum money with Bearer
16. ffor it is in a sure hand; and I wald desire 3ow
17. to send me over ane Clok and sum money;
18. yerfor I am not to truble tua\(^{60}\) much I will rest;
19. I recommand 3ow to ye protection of ye
20. Almichtie God; ffrom Dewbruch; yis be
21. delyverit to my loving father James Spens
22. servitor to my Lord Privie Seill in Edinburgh
23. 1618
24. to my loving father James Spens servitor to my Lord Privie Seil
25. Edinburgh 1618

(reverse)

To my loving father James Spens servitor to my Lord Privie Seill in Edinburgh; this be delyverit in Edinburgh

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\(^{59}\) When used of persons in Scots ‘feir’ means ‘in health and vigour’.

\(^{60}\) Here Spens hypercorrects ‘too’ to the Scots for ‘two’ and so renders it ‘tua’.
1. Loving moder; after my maist hairtlie comandationis I am to lat 30w to wit
2. yat I bein verie seik yis haelf 3eir or yerby; bot now praised be god I am
3. mending for I have had ye cords sua lang; Bot loving moder I am weill
4. now praised be to godt; be in gude comfort for I thocht verie lang to wryt
5. to 30w of my estait and your sister is in gude helth praisid be god and hir husband;
6. loving moder I wald requist 30w maist hairtlie with ye first pasag to
7. wryte to me of your estait and if my fayer did his dewtie to 30w of any
8. thing or if he help 30w anything for loving moder I think lang to heirof your
9. estait; as for ye peiß of gold yat 3e send I have bocht tua sarks with it
10. now loving moder; xxxxxxxxxxx
11. xxxxxxxx for loving moder I am sorie yat I have
12. trublit 30w soo fair for alles I knaw your estait and loving moder
13. I wald desyr 30w maist eernistlie yat 3e wald speik to my loving fayer to send
14. me soo much as ane cloot of Gray agane winter if he feir God; not desering
15. 30w loving moder to trubil your self in any things; for is Godt knaws
16. 3e have doen above power to me sen I was born; for if ever Godt
17. mak me ane man I sall Remember on it for I hoop upoun Godt to be ane man
18. to doe 30w gude; wald toe Godt yat my fayer wald doe his dewtie to 30w
19. as he Aucht to doe Beffoir Godt an man; I will requist 30w
20. maist eernistlie to wryte to me with ye first pasag how yat 3e
21. can he agrie togidder; and as for your letters and your things sie yat
22. 3e keip yame weill ffrom his Hands and herri your self not moir;
23. my loving and hartlie comandationis to my fayer and til al
24. gude freinds and to my loving moder my hairtlie comandationis
25. no farder; Bot Commith 30w to ye protectione of almichtie
26. God; ffrom Dewbruch yis Be delyverit 1619
27. Your loving soone James Spens at power
28. I wald requist 30w to send it with yis Bearer James Carmichi;
29. your sister maks hir hartlie comandationis to 30w from Dewbruch;
30. loving sister efter my hairtlie comandationis I am to
31. lat 30w to wit yat I am in gude helf praisid be God
32. at yis present; desering ye lyk of 30w nothing; command
33. me till all freinds and till entertain your self;
34. and pray 30w quhen Ser3and Jack comes to wryt your estai[t];
35. and pliß god I sall send an teken with him to 30w
36. for we can get non to send it with; and pliß ye Lord
37. it sall be send with Ser3and Jack in quhat place he is
38. in; is was teken yat yer was no paper in Edinburgh
39. yat 3e sent not ane letter; no thing bot comithing 30w to god
40. my hartlie comadations [to] 30w

(reverse)
To my loving moder Agnes Walker; this be delyverit in the Cannongait
RH9/2/235: James Spens to his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, Riga, 1 October 1628

1. Rrycht loving and weilbelovit spous in cryst Jesus; yis present
2. is to schaw 30w yat at ye writing heirof I am in gudd helth
3. wisching from my very hairt ye lyk of 30w and 3our child and
4. my father and mother and all Ayer gude freinds quhetsumever yat
5. loves us; mervelling my hairt of 30w yat misconntentment 3e
6. have gottin of me yat 3e send me here so much as any written
7. to me; and I have written I think above tuentie tymes this 3eir
8. quhil macks me think something aills 30w; for gif 3e had written
9. to me and it had bein in the farrest pairt of the world I
10. wold have both send 30w anser and have comit my selff
11. howbeit it sould have cost me my lyf ye world sould
12. not have holdin me frome 30w my hairt; and gif 3e sie ane
13. fit occassioun quherby I may live lyk ane honest man with
14. 30w I intreit 30w to send me word with ye first occa
15. -sioun and I sall com with the haist I tak; and gif 3e have
16. no knowledg as 3it [...] at any yat loves 30w and me
17. quher I can pane and plane to live in better yan 3e last
18. I had and I sall obey 3our first wryttinge to me; for I
19. sie 3e will not com to me for I thank god I could h[...]
20. maintaine 30w honestlie heir; bot I will not trubill 30w
21. sa beand it be 3our will not to com from 3our friends; and
22. I will not trubill 30w bot I refer 30w to 3our awin discret[ion]
23. for I have heir in ye moneth ten dollar swanis and I thot
24. sindrie tymis to have send 30w money bot I durst not
25. haisert to send it to 30w for feir ye have never sene it and
26. yat wold have grevit me; I pray 30w my hairt hold mee &
27. trust in writing so angrillie to 30w for sundrie of 3our bred
28. grevit me in yat 3e wroitt to me so unkyndlie; bot I tak
29. God to witness if I deservit such at 30w hand; I have
30. tain this occasioun to wryt yis letter thinking yat my cornell
31. will be home this spring tyme and I look to com my selff
32. if I can get licence at my cornells hands; yerfor I intreat 30w
33. to tak ane gude pairt for it greivis me your unkyndnes;
34. desiring 30w under god to have ane cair of my sone and
35. to learne I need to know his treatus in the dayis of his youth; desyring
36. 30w to excuse me yet I can not get wrrittin to my father and
37. my mother schowing my wryt yat I wold have send my mother
38. home ane but or elß ane better token; but I durst not pairsue
39. for feir yat it wold not bein delyverit; for sundrie letters ar
40. broken up yat coms here from Scotland witch taiken to yis
41. land; I wrait to 30w concerning ane truent wyf quho
42. duells in John Frank land in Cowgait in Colledg Wynd who
43. wold have comit with 30w; remember my love to my fayer
44. and mother; and Gilbert Johnstoun and his wyf; and Eliza

61 10 Swedish Rixdaler per month. This would equate to about £2.50 Sterling. For the conversion of Swedish currency in this period see Grosjean, An Unofficial Alliance, pp.xi-xii.
45. -beth Bailzie and hir dochter; and Janet Merschell; to Wm Cuth
46. -bertsone my gossop\(^62\) and his wyf and to ʒour selff and my
47. bairne above all; I rest ʒour husband to death James Spens drumer maior;
48. from Riga the 1 of October 1628

(reverse)
To my loving spouse Elizabeth Baillzie; in duellar in the Cannongait in *Edinburgh* theeß be
delyverit in hir hand

\(^{62}\) Gossop is a godparent in Scots.
1. 
   1. Rrycht loving spous; efter my maist hairtlie commandationis
   2. I am to lat yow to wit yat I am in gud health praisid be the
   3. almichtie god of heavin; and desyris fra my verie heart the lyk of yow
   4. and my father and mother and all uther gffreinds quhatsumever; I wrytin
   5. to yow sundrie and diverf tymes and mervill mikill yat ye never wryt
   6. to me againe; it seameth yat 3e have forgot me or think I am deid; not
   7. praisid be god almichtie; I am alyff in gud estait as ever I was in
   8. my lyff tym of praisid be the almichtie god of heavin for all hie giffs;
   9. for I have lippinit63 everie day for yow heir and it seameth yat 3e have
      not a mynd to cum to me for 3e think your self over gud Lassie yow;
   11. I sall not trubill yow with mair writing; I protest 3e sall byd thrie
   12. hundreth 3eir beffoir I send ane letter for yow agane; I desyre
   13. no mair but yat 3e will wryt to me your quholl mynd to me yat I may
   14. be at rest with my self; for your cuming not hes hunderth me64 ane
   15. hunderth punds Scots money yat I have not; for 3e neid not mak that
   16. excusB yat 3e had not company for SanderB Trent wyff wald

17. have cumit with yow and Robert Dowglas wyff & sundrie uthers; I
   desyre yow maist earnistlie to wryt to me my Burd giff yat 3e
   Knew any lyff for me in Scotland quherby I may leiff onything
   with yow better than I doe heir; I requist yow wryt to me and
   be gods grace I sall cum hame to yow at spring tyme; therfor with
   out 3e Knew better doe not wryt for me I have everie weik
   to spend ten testins65; yerfor desyr me not from my better to my wersss
   without 3e Knew better; yerfor I requist yow my deir burd to wryt
   to me quhidder 3e will cum to me or I sall cum to yow; for it is not
   gods will yat we suld be so long sundrie as we ar; bot I know evill
   report is the wyt66 3e wryt to me the last tym; so evill as 3e did
   bot giff yat 3e wryt not ane anser to me with the ffirst occasion better
   then the last tym I resavit your letters yat I was such a man as
   3e wryt; I protest to god I sall be such a man as 3e said I sall
   tak ane uther wyff heir; for it had bein in your way fyve hundreth
   merks yat 3e had cumit and pairs of cheirs syn to the land quher I am;
   for I thank god cum quhich 3e will 3e sall not want to doe your tyme;
   for it greiffs me yat 3e will not obey my wrytyn so aft as I have
   wrytyn; I have wrytyn everie particular to yow at yis tymc concerning
   everie thing quhilk 3e may tak up giff yat 3e pleib your self; for my
   love is ever towards yow quhilk 3e may knaw for als I sall answer to god;
   giff yat I had ane sure hand I wald send sum money bot I doe
   not lippin in thame for breking up my letters; yherfore I requist
   yat I be not greiffit mair nor trublit in mynd and I am ferther;

63 The Scots word 'lippin' means to “To trust, rely or depend on, have confidence in (a person (to do something)”). Here Spens appears to be using the past-tense to mean ‘depended on you coming here’. He uses it later in the letter in the sense of trust.
64 Here Spens uses ‘hunderth’ twice in proximity, but it looks like an error for hindered or cost me. He is implying that by not coming over, his wife has cost him £100 Scots money, presumably for transportation paid to an agent.
65 A silver coin, originally French, then minted in Scotland. 4-5 shillings value.
66 Possibly the Scots ‘wy at’. In this context meaning ‘the way that you wrote to me’.

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RH9/2/236: James Spens to his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, Riga, 1 October 1628
41. Lord knaws my trew hairt towards yow I will not trubill yow farder
42. bot desyring to remember my commandationis and service to my
43. father and mother with ye blessing of god be with yame both till our
44. meiting; and especiall to my sone Wm Spenß with my blessing be with him;
45. rember [sic.] remember my powir to Elspet Baillʒie and her dochter and
46. Gilbert Johnstone and his wyff & to Wm Cuthbertson my gosop & his wyf;
47. & to Jenet Merschell & to Jenet Stevisone & to Robert Dowgläß wyff chawing hir
48. he is weill; to Robert Jemesone the piperrer his sone is with me [&] verie weill; to Patrik
49. Aillin; to Manß Hamiltoun; to Jon Kilgowe; to to all freinds in generall respect
50. Riga 1628 the first of October 1 October
51. your loving husbant James Spens
52. drummer magor to croner67 Spens regement

Riga in Leifland 1628
Riga October 1 first

(reverse)
To my loving spous Elizabeth Baillʒie induellar in the Cannongait in Edinbugrh; therß be
delyverit hand theese [...]
RH9/2/237: James Spens to his wife, Elizabeth Baillie, Riga, 1 November 1628

1. Rrycht loving and weilbelovit spouß in Jesus chryst;  
2. thir present is to lat yow to understand that I am in gud  
3. health at this present and desyris fra my wirie heart  
4. ye lyk of yow and all gud freinds quhatsumever [and] my ffather  
5. and mother; lating yow to understand yat I have fund the  
6. occatione of this bearar to wryt to yow; for so many tymes  
7. I have wryten befoir to yow and can get no anser fra yow  
8. quhilk I mervill mikill of your unkyndnes towards me your  
9. loyaull husband; mervilling mikill yat ye tak never the  
10. paines anß to wryt to me; for it seameth yat ʒe belive  
11. yat I am deid; not praisid be almichtie god of heavin for  
12. I am verie weil l praisid be god; for I have trublit my selff  
13. so many tymes in wryting for yow to cum to me and ʒe wald  
14. never cum nor send me ane anser of yo ʒe sall not cum;  
15. for be the grace of god giff y ʒe sall sie  
16. yow this summer be gods grace; for I will assur yow I will not  
17. stay at home but will bring yow with me; for ʒe micht a holdin  
18. in my Travill giff yat ʒe pleisit your self; for giff the cornell  
19. will lat me away I most stay still and help my  
20. selff the best I can; for as for wryting for yow I feir  
21. I will not wryt no mair for yow bot I will wryt always  
22. to chaw that I am weill; but the grace of god I will  
23. doe my best at the croner hauß to sie giff yat he  
24. will lat me away to cum to yow; giff he will not  
25. I tak god to witneß I can not help it for the lord  
26. knawis my mynd towards yow or uthers I had not  
27. taiken the cair yat I tak of yow; for my mynd is trublit  
28. everie nicht for I wad I had givin ane hundreth pund  
29. yat I had brucht yow with me; for giff I was in Scotland  
30. ʒe suld not stay yher I [w]ryt to yow to me is with Sanders  
31. Trent wyff in Edinburgh in Scotts Wynd; ʒe sall be so gud as  
32. to wryt to me ye maner of Scotland quhow it is; for I asur  
33. yow I will cum giff yat ye curnell will giff me leiff for  
34. althocht I have not mutcht geir I sall have gud closs; and  
35. wryt to me giff yat ʒe have takin under with Wm Foster or not  
36. for I will live my ʒeß geir heir till my bak cuming; for I will not  
37. stay at home yerfor; sie giff pliß gods yat I cum hame quhat  
38. no mor trubill me; for I rather never cum for gif yat ʒe war  
39. with me ʒe micht live weill; asht the bearer for I protest to  
40. god I lie not; for ʒe may belive for wald belivit yow mair  
41. rests with my blissing to yow and my bairns; and father & mother

68 ‘Mister’ in Scots means `want, privation, necessity or need’.
69 In the context his appears to be a variant of ask, though the writing is unclear.
44. and all freinds with my commandations to all in gennerall; for I am sorie
45. yat the peper is at ane end; rests Riga in Leifland 1628;
46. ye first of November 1628 november;
47. Your loving husbant till death
48. James Spens drummer magor to ye
49. croner Spens regament 1628

(reverse)
To my loving spous Elizabeth Bailzie in dualler in the Cannongait in Edinburgh; thes be
delyverit in hand James Spenss

70 The word is unclear, but given that we know he mentions at least one child elsewhere, ‘baim’ or ‘bairns’ makes sense.
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RH9/2/238: James Spens & Elizabeth Baillie to Agnes Walker, Riga 29 May [1629 or 1630]

1. Rrycht loving mother; efter my maist hairtlie command
2. -ationis I am to lat yow to wit yat at this present I am
3. in verie gude health and wish fra my werie heart the
4. lyk of yow; for I thank god almitich sinc I left yow
5. I have bein in many dangers for the furst day yat I chippit
6. in at Leith the chip and yer cho lay at ane moneth and spendit
7. the best pairt of ye money yat I had; and then efter yat I
8. was nyn weiks upon the sie and then landit at Gottenberrie\(^71\)
9. and thair gat horb to travill up in the cuntry to Stockholm
10. bot the first occasioun yat I marcht with [...] Gottinberie the
11. first day I lost all my cloëb for the bouer\(^72\) yat cariet
12. yam upone the wagan stale frum uß away and never
13. sae him agane; for as I sall anßer to god yat quhen I cam
14. to Stockholm I had not so much as my sark to spit\(^73\) upone
15. my bak; nor nothing to live upone war not his Lord of
16. Wormmeston\(^74\) and his sone Lieutenant James Spenss[D] [...] 
17. gave me money utherywis I had been at ane sempill
18. estait quhilk god knows my greif for as I sall anßer to god;
19. I have nothing left me nather cloëb nor nothing; and
20. was fyftein weiks in Stokholm befir I com to my gudman
21. [...] bot quich I am praisid be god he maid me verie welcom
22. and war not for ye loß of my geir [...] I gat my self;
23. for I hop in god my worst dayis is past and my best days
24. is coming; I hop in god with ye first occation yat I
25. sall send yow ane taikin of xxx my love; and I hop in god
26. ʒe sall have it shortlie for my gudman hes had anuch\(^76\) to
27. doe with me; senc I com ye money yat I have he wared
28. it upone cloëb beffir I cumit\(^77\) in the chip [...] 
29. or utherywis ʒe suld have had ane [token] of my love;
30. mother I thank yow fra my werie [he]art for the
31. gud commandationis yat scho give yow yat [ʒe?] war so gud to
32. hir and my bairmes; I hop in god to cum hame and sie
33. yow lyth and mirrie; yerfor be in gud [com]fort rests
34. with my commandationis to Gilbert Jonsto[ne] [vellum torn];
35. my blassing to his bedfellow for hir [...] yat che...
36. shawin to me many in my mister; and to your dochter [...] and
37. [...] I [...] and to Patrik Hairt and his wyff;

\(^{71}\) Gotenberrie is the Scots rendering of Gothenburg.

\(^{72}\) Bouer here meaning someone of low social class (eg bauer in German, boer in Dutch and bonde in Swedish). The word is used in English (boor) to mean a rude person or one without manners but does not appear in the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. Spens probably picked up the word from on his continental travels.

\(^{73}\) There is little doubt that Spens intended to write the Scots variant of ‘put’ here – ‘pit’. In his memorandum, Duncan quotes this sentence and renders it as such. However, the S is clearly visible.

\(^{74}\) General Sir James Spens of Wormiston.

\(^{75}\) Lieutenant James Spens was the eldest son of Sir James Spens of Wormiston and his first wife, Agnes Durie.

\(^{76}\) This is Scots for ‘enough’.

\(^{77}\) Spens leaves a space after ‘cum’ and before ‘it’, but is using ‘cumit’ (correctly) as the past participle for came.
38. to Walter Logan and his wyff and bairnes; till John Scot his
39. wyff and bairnes; tell John Scot I pray yat he sall be payit
40. wair not my fortouns I had payit him now at yis present tyme; and to
41. maister James Hana I pray yow tell him yat his letters is lost with my
42. guds; and till Elspet Jonstoun; to my servand Robert […] to his wyf Cristian
43. Paire; to my cumer78 Margrit Dowglaß; to my nevewe Cristian Moris
44. […] to Jenet Makilmon; to hir sone Robert Hamilton; to Hendrie Seytre
45. his wyf; to Patrik Elsehntir and his wyf; to Robert Cranstoun his wyf; and
46. to Wm Cudbersone his wyf my gosop; I pray chaw yan my letter and my
47. estait to my loving anti Besie Linsay;
48. your loving dochter Elspet Baillie till death and your sone James Spens
49. Riga in Leifland
50. the 29 of Maii

[Written into the left hand margins:]
PS 1: Mak my haitlie commandationis to Thomas Crichtoun & to Barbrie his79 sister & to
Jenet Merchell & hir gud man
PS2: Desyring yow loving mother to mak my haitlie commandationis to Wm Bairner and
his wyff & hoping in god to sie him blyth and mirrie; and pay him to Georg Leslie and his
wyff and his bairnes and ye nuribi & to Fergiß Couall & his wyff

Reverse
To my loving mother Agnes Walker indweller in the Cannongait […] theses; yow pray
commendations […] John Haburn […] dochter for I […] 3et with by blessing

78 This is an older Scots term for Godmother.
79 This reads ‘hir’ but in context must mean ‘his’.
RH9/2/239: James Spens to his mother, Agnes Walker, no date.

1. Mother I intret yow to seik for Jenet Richisone my needie; and comend me to hir and tell you to remember my love and dewtie to my father; bot I wonder of his unkyndnes towards my wyf becaus scho brocht hir not with away cuming quhilk was the leist thing in the world to be kind; desrying him to wryt to me with the first occasionis; I requist yow to commend me to Jenet Merchell & hir gud man; commend me to Manß Hamilton with John; Patrik Aillen; John Kilgowr; tells Robert Jameson the piferer his sone is verie weill and gets his twed for by the kings means; desrying him to wryt to him; comend me to Jon Pollock my auld commerad drumer and tell him my love towards al gud friends; hoping ʒe will ane gud heart yow for I sall not for set yow be gods grace; nor my wyff; for hir Love remeneth ever towards yow; lat all there yat I have written to sie the letter yat I will not for set yame as they forget me; with my hairtlie commandationis to Walter Logan and tell him I rest; comending me to all other frends yat I have forget; committing yow to god all; lukiing for your anser chortlie; rests at Riga;
desiring yow to delyver theeß letters and recommend me Robert Dowglas sister and tell hir hir brother is verie weill in gud health; desrying hir to tell his friends with his hartlie comandations to yow all his gud freinds [...] to sie yow blyth & mirrie;
intreat yow to goe to Jene Haburne for I am sorrie fra my hairt for the schaith yat scho gat in my company; I intreat hir to wryt to me for gods cauß quhilk I hop scho will commend me to hir for gods cauße [...] (reverse)
To my werie loving [...] Georg Spens [...] delyver thame to my mother Agnes Walker induallar in the Cannongait [...]
RH9/2/240: James Spens to his father and mother, Agnes Walker, Riga, 1630.

1. Rrycht loving ffather and mother my humble love and
dewtie Being Remembrit to yow and my mother; lating yow
to wit that I am in werie gude health at ye writing heiroff
and desyris fra my werie heart to heir the lyk of yow and all
gude ffreinds quihatsumever; desyring to recommend me to yam all;
lating yow to understand yat it hes plised god all michtie to tak
my loving wyff fra me quhilk is ane great greiff to my heart; ʒit
the Lord Jesus comfort me for scho deid in hir Birth in ye pest;
alwayis I giff ye lord thanks; desyring to recomend me to all
hir ffreinds and mfn for and pliβ god I think not to sie Scot
-land this sevin ʒeirs for hir saik;
desyring yow loving mother to
lating yow to understand yα t it hes plised god all michtie to tak
aneg uhi lk is a ne great greiff to my heart;
the Lord Jesus comfort me for scho deid in hir birth in ye pest;
alwayis I intret for to wryt to me with the ffirst occasioun
quhow αr or quhat estait αr in; & gif god call upone yow αe
have no body neir yow any thing yat αe have liv it with Robert Cranston
my ffreind or utherwayis with maister Spens; for gif ʒe doe not
no body will get gud of it; mother I speik not for greid of
geir bot doe according to your pliser for so lang as I leiff I will
not want I will get my living; bot I tell yow for the best for
sall never com in Scotland without I have to doe my awin turn;
But I sall never forget yow so long as I leiff quhilk is my dewtie
for the cair ʒe have had of me; for I hop not to marie ane wyff
till I get ane Scots woman; alwayis recomend my humble
service to my ffather and chow him of my wellfair; I thank god I
have to doe my awin turne for walth I have not quhilk the
Berer can tell yow; I intreat yow to drink with him; I wald
have send sum lunk85 with him bot he can tell yow it allβ
so deir heir and in Scotland; I have no ffarder to truble
yow bot the Blessing of god to remain ever mair with yow als
desyring your letter schortlie remcomend [sic.] me to Wm Foster for
give I com in Scotland I sall pay him; recommend me to all my
auld commerads to Manβ; to Patrik Aillin; to Kilgour; to
Gilbert Jonston his wyff & bairnes; to Elspet Bail3e & hir dochter;
to Margrit Reid and hir husband; to Wm Čudbersoun & his wyff;
& to Robert Cranstoun wyff my gud friend; for I hop to sie yam als
bleth & mirrie; & pliβ gud Recommend I pray to my auld
servant Jenet Richisoun desiring; rests with ye bliss
-ving of ye almichtie to rest with forever mair Riga in

85 Lunk is Scots word for a kind of cloth.
46. Leiffland ye first of October 16 16\textsuperscript{86} [sic.] 30
47. Your loving sone til
48. death James Spens drumer magor under
49. his Majesty in Sweadin.

PS: Recommend me to my maister Jon Matheson & his wyff for it may be I can not find occasion to wryt agane so sone

(reverse)
To my werie loving mother Agnes Walker in duallar in Cannongait theeß; in caice of failʒier delyver to my father James Spens

\textsuperscript{86} I looks as though Spens originally wrote 16 26, then changed the 26 to i6 and followed it with 30.
RH9/2/241: James Spens to his father and mother, Amsterdam, 12 November 1631

1. Rycht Loving and weilbelovit Father and mother my love being
2. remember to yow both; chawing yow yat I am in gude health at this present
3. wrytting and desiring to heer the lyk of yow and all gud freindis quhatsumever;
4. lating yow to wnderstand yat I taikin my pas from me Lord of Wormistoun
5. and hes left the king of Suadin servic and hes travilte into Holland
6. and hes mait with your sister and chow is in werrie gude health and hir
7. husbant to; lating yow to wnderstand yat William Robertson and his wyff is
8. dead; and I my selff hes taikin ane Jurnay in hand that non of my kin
9. ever hes tain ye Lyk in hand; quhilk is to the eist ingies\(^{87}\) [sic.] quhilk I am taik
10. on for sevin ʒeiris; fyve ʒeiris in the Land and ane ʒeir cuming and
11. ane ʒeir going quhilk I hop in Jesus chryst yat it sall be the best Jurnay
12. yat ever I took in hand to ye glorie of god and your comfortis; for I have
13. bein borne to Travill ye quhilk I give god thank\(^{88}\) for I will never for
14. bein borne to Travill ye quhilk I give god thank\(^{88}\) for I will never for
15. god yat he will preserve me in this Jurnay to; chawing yow yat it hes
16. plisit god Almichtie to call wpone my Brother for he depairit
17. in Duwchland\(^{88}\) abowe tua moneth at the plisour of god Almichtie; chawin
18. yow yat I have wryttin tua serverall tymes senc I com heir in Holland
19. to yow desiring ye maist earnistlie to tak no discomfort for he […]
20. Jesus chryst to sie yow blyth and mirrie in gude estait to the glorie
21. of god and your comfortis; ye the quhilk with a sad heart I wrycht theeb letters
22. bot allways to chaw yow yat ʒe sall not think I am dead; Intreating yow
23. both gif yat it plis god to call wpone yow yat ʒe remember wpone me
24. quho is your only begottin chyld ye quhilk ʒe haif no moir childrin in the
25. world bot I alone; ye quhilk gif it plis god to call wpone me I sall
26. livff yow a remembranc of me; bot I hop in Jesus chryst to sie yow
27. bot alyff and mirrie at my returmee; ʒe sall wnderstand yat I have maid
28. a wow to god almichtic for hir saik yat is with god yat for sevin ʒeiris to
29. travill the quhilk I will keip my promeis for I have many crosis in yis world;
30. bot quhen god [took] my deir wyff fra me yat was ye greatest cros yat ever I had
31. for I will never forget hir sua lang as I livff; for scho was my comfort
32. in this world; lating yow to wnderstand yat Bessie Kowin sone Georg
33. Borthuik and hes mait at Amsterdam and he and I ar going away
34. togidder as commeradis; desyriing yow to chaw his mother and comend
35. me to all freindis especiall to Robert Craintoun and his wyff and to Margret
36. Wood and hir husband; and to William Cubertson my gosop and his wyff
37. and to Manß Hamiltoun and his wyff; and Kilgour; and to Gilbert Johnson
38. and his wyff; and to Jenet Richisone my auld servant and all wyeris
39. quhomi I have foȝet in gennerall; my hairt is with yow all; remember
40. my servic to William Foster and tell gif yat it plisit god to send me hame
41. I sall pay him; remember my lowff to Georg Spens and his wyff for
42. ye kyndnes yat did to my wyff ye quhilk scho remembrit wpone hir dead bed;
43. and gif John Pollok cum to Edinburghe remember my lowff to him; ye tyme is short
44. I rest with the blissing of god almichtie to be with yow all till meiting for

\(^{87}\) East Indies.
\(^{88}\) Germany.
45. my hairt is sorrie at yis tyme; restis at Amsterdam ye 3eir of 1631
46. ye 12 day of novemver comend me to John Mathesone my maister
47. your Lowing James
48. Spens drumer magor
49. till death yours at command

Reverse:
1. chawin yow it may be we will lay heir
2. ane moneth still before is way going;
3. entreating yow gif Georg Borthwick mother
4. wryt heir wryt ye with hir to Amsterdam
5. to Robert Thomsone and he will find me
6. for he dwelleth […]
7. gif yat 3e would wrt […] gif that 3e […] have
8. occasionne [which] I wisse everie Day.

To my weerie loving mother
Agnes Walker in dweller
at the Cannongait beside
ye Croß above […]
Therß be delevrit in hand
RH9/2/242: James Spens to his father and mother, Guinea Coast, 23 February 1632

1. Rycbth Loving and weilbelovit Father and mother; efter my maist hairtlie
2. commendationis being remembrit to your selffis lating yow to wnderstand
3. yat I am in gude health at this present writing; desyring maist earnest
4. to heir ye lyk of yow and all gud Freindis; chawing yow yat we ar at our refresing
5. place praisid be gud almiichtie abowt four thowsand Scotis mylis from
6. Holland; and as 3it we have abowe sexeit thowsand mylis Scotis to the
7. place quhair we ar ordineit to remane ye quhilk is Botavavia\textsuperscript{89}; I have
8. not much to truble yow bot wrying to yow thir few lynis ye quhilk
9. we ar lying at refresing in ane countrie quhair the blakamore dwale;
10. for we have saillit for by Spane for by the cost of Barbarie and Geney
11. ye quhilk lys in ye waistingis; and ar comit to the chirlinis\textsuperscript{90} ye quhilk yair
12. is no winter at all bot at tymes hot wedder; for I have travallit be land
13. yis aucbt 3eiris and moir and now I will travill be sea [lacuna] saill as weil
14. as we can it will be ane 3eir to wss; alwayis I tak as weill with the
15. sea as with ye land and better praisid be god for my heid hes
16. never warkit and we have had deid in our chip fourteen; praised
17. be god Georg Borthuik and I ar in gud health and he makis his command
18. -tionis to his Freindis all in gennerall; lating yow to wit yat I wad not wis
19. for never so much bot yat I had comit yis wayadg for I sie so many sindrie
20. thingis for we ar among wyld people; for we have orangeris and lemonis
21. and suker reidis and noot mugis and many wther thingis for the taiking off
22. ye treis; I wad not wis for gold bot yat I had comit yis Jurnay
23. for I can not wrycht to ye gudnes yat I find be traviling and seing of
24. faring cuntries; for it is plisit god yat I was borne to travill; always
25. I prais god for I have greit contentment be it moir then sum
26. Lairdis of your Landis; for I most be fyve 3eirs in ye land and a 3eir
27. cuming and ane 3eir going and plis god to spair me so lang
28. dayis yat quhen my fyve 3eiris is out I sall cum hare and sie yow;
29. and yair efter I have som Freindis I sall tak me to travill so lang
30. as I leiff; I have no Farder to truble yow bot intriting yow
31. to pray for me and giff me your blissing; ye lord I may have
32. his blissing and remember wpone me for I hop in Jessus chryst
33. to doe yow and my Father and all Freindis credit and ouer I hop
34. yat ye god of heavin will healp me; intriting yow to remember my
35. commendationis to Robert Cranstoun and his wyff; & to my gosop William
36. Cudthbertsoun; & to John Brut & his wyff; and to Patrik Aillin;
37. & to Georg Spens and his wyff; & to William Foster and sie how much
38. yat I am awin him; for my wyff tauld me yat cho maid him
39. ruffis and sindrie wark; yairfor ask him bot lat not wit yat
40. I wrycht bot recommend me to him; and to Gilbert Johnstoun
41. and his wyff; and to James Aitin ye bailzie; and to Walter
42. Logane ye clark and his wyff with ye blessings of god remain[...]
43. with yow and yame all; for I can not have ocaitoun to wrycht ever[ie]
44. tyme; for yis is be fortowne yat yair lay ane chip yat was going to

\textsuperscript{89} Batavia, modern day Jakarta in Indonesia.
\textsuperscript{90} Shorelines.
45. Holland I thocht yat I wad wrycht with yam; remember my comman
dation
46. to Georg Boruthiik his wyff and mother and bit yat
47. they tak in gud comfort for we ar wereie weill & wantis nether
48. wyn nor beir & meit thrie tymes a day; ye Lord keip yow
49. and me in his protectioun; restis restis [sic.] at ye chirlines in
50. Geney ye 23 day of Febrewaris ye zeir of god 1632;
51. intreating yow to remember my kyndnes
52. to John Pollok yat
53. is drumer in Aberdein; Your Lowing sone James Spens
54. drumer magor

Reverse:

To my verie loving ffather
James Spens induallar
with my Lord of Privie seil
in Edinburgh; failjing him
to Agnes Walker
in Dauallar in ye Cannongait
in Edinburgh; fail3uar to Georg
Spens. Thel be deliver in hand