

David Browne (fl. 1622-38)

"Master David Browne, His Majesties Scribe, Sainct-Andrewes" is how this writing-master styles himself on the title-page of his *Calligraphia* which was published in 1622 from the University Press at St Andrews. Massey calls him "a learned and ingenious Scotchman", epithets which seem to be well chosen for he produced a book "wherein", as he claims, "is comprehended the whole necessarie Rules ... by which anie who is carefull to learne may without the helpe of any other Teacher, under God ... bee informed concerning the right writing of the most usuall Characters in the World". This instruction he carries to the extent of over 200 pages, but the only hints of exemplars for the pupil are provided by spaces left here and there in the text which should have been filled in by Browne or his clerks-unfortunately the spaces sometimes remained vacant (as in the BM copy). In such case the sole assistance that the tyro in the art receives is from the text itself which comprises "arguments and instructions full of heavy learning, wise saws, puerile illustrations, and the most common matters having reference to writing" (D.N.B.).

In his second work, *The Introduction to the true understanding of the whole Arte of Expedition in teaching to write*, published in 1638, he is hardly more lavish of his calligraphy than before. There is only one plate in this-a specimen of "The new, swift current or speedy Italian writting". Indeed, although he professes "to shew the possibilitie of skill in teaching and probabilitie of success in learning to write in 6 hours!", he seems to have had more concern to remove "a vulgare opinion against his native cuntry of Scotland...He sheweth that it hath moe excellent Prerogatives than any other Kingdome... Whereby it will rather follow that a Scottishman is so much the more able to prosecute whatsoever hee undertaketh, and therefore so much the more to be respected, by how so much he is more ingenious than one of another nation". Despite these contentions our author does not seem to have been more assiduous in his teaching than most, for he announces that "He practiseth the most part of the day in the Terme time and most of the after noone in the vacation at the Cat and Fiddle in Fleet Street, and most of the fore noone at his house in S. Johns Street, next above the Vnicorne, except when he is invited to the Country at any time, especially in the long vacation". From which it would appear that, by his removal from St Andrews to Fleet Street, he had caught something of the ways of the slothful Sassenach. He goes on to tell us of the household in St John's Street "where likewise Mary Stewart and her daughters doe instruct young Noble and Gentle women in good manners, languages writing and other qualities, by his assistance and direction". How long this menage lasted we do not know, but we are left to infer that it was not long-lived, for on the last page of the book we are told that "Since the first sheet hereof was printed the Professor hath removed to a cuntrye house in Kemmington [sic], which adjoineth to Newington-butts (a little above the sign 'Jacobs Well', about a mile from London, and halfe a mile from Westminster) where he usually attendeth everie morning till ten a clock and the rest of the day at the Sign of the 'Spectacles' over against the royall Exchange". In the Harleian MS- 5949 is a page of calligraphy signed "David Brown Scotus scr: J. Gessen (sculpt)". This is not the original of the page of Italian Hand which appears in Browne's *Introduction*, etc. and it is doubtful whether it ever was engraved. We meet with this writing-master also in the 1667 edition of John Davies' *Writing Schoolemaster*, the preface to which is signed "David Brown". In other editions this name does not appear.