

SUMMARY: The letter below was written on 2 July 1577 from Willoughby House in London by Katherine (1519-1580), Duchess of Suffolk, to Lord Burghley. Other documents indicate that in July 1577 the prospective marriage between Oxford's sister, Lady Mary Vere (d.1624) and the Duchess' son, Peregrine Bertie (1555-1601), later Lord Willoughby d'Eresby, was strongly disapproved of by Oxford, by Peregrine Bertie's parents, and apparently by the Queen herself. A letter written by Peregrine Bertie in July 1577 indicates that he was confined to Willoughby House by his parents (see 8ANC 1-10). He says that he is unwilling to 'lose so much occasion' to write, 'since I know not when to recover it again', and that he is 'locked up so fast as I could scarce get pen and paper to be the present messengers of my poor goodwill'. By 15 December, however, it would appear that all parties approved of the marriage, and that not only were the Duchess and her future daughter-in-law on good terms, but Oxford and the Duchess as well (see BL Lansdowne 25/27, f. 56). Mary de Vere and Peregrine Bertie were married sometime after Christmas 1577 (see *HMC Rutland*, i, p. 115), and before 12 March 1578, when the Duchess wrote to Lord Burghley asking that he 'grant her daughter [i.e. daughter-in-law] Mary and her husband a bill of impost for two tuns of wine to be taken at Boston or Hull' (see Cecil Papers 160/119). The transcript of the letter is taken from Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents* (London: John Murray, 1928) p. 152.

It is very true that my wise son has gone very far with my Lady Mary Vere, I fear too far to turn. I must say to you in counsel what I have said to her plainly, that I had rather he had matched in any other place, and I told her the causes: her friends made small account of me, her brother did what in him lay to deface my husband and son; besides, our religions agree not, and I cannot tell what more. If she should prove like her brother, if an empire follows her I should be sorry to match so. She said that she could not rule her brother's tongue, nor help the rest of his faults, but for herself she trusted so to use her as I should have no cause to dislike her, and seeing that it was so far forth between my son and her, she deserved my goodwill and asked no more. That is a seemly thing, quoth I, for you to live on, for I feart that Master Bertie will so much dislike of these dealings that he will give little more than his goodwill, if he give that. Besides, if her Majesty shall dislike of it, sure we turn him to the wide world. She told me how Lord Sussex and Master Hatton had promised to speak for her to the Queen, and that I would require you to do the like. I told her her brother used you and your daughter so evil that I could not require you to deal in it. Well, if I would write, she knew you would do it for my sake, and since there was no undoing it, she trusted I could, for my son's sake, help now. [The Duchess goes on to say that the Queen has found fault with her for keeping Peregrine away from court.] But God knows I did it not so, but for fear of this marriage and quarrels. Within this fortnight there was one spoke to me for one Mistress Gamage, an heir of a thousand marks' land, which had been a meeter match for my son.