

SUMMARY: The undated draft letter below was written from Willoughby House in London to Oxford's sister, Lady Mary de Vere (d.1624), by Peregrine Bertie (1555-1601), later Lord Willoughby d'Eresby. A letter from Peregrine Bertie's mother, Katherine (1519-1580), Duchess of Suffolk, written on 12 March 1578 asks Lord Burghley 'to 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). Mary de Vere and Peregrine Bertie were therefore married sometime after Christmas 1577 (see *HMC Rutland*, i, p. 115) and before 12 March 1578. A bequest in the will of Lady Mary Keys (1545-1578) to Mary de Vere and her new husband, Peregrine Bertie, also indicates that the couple were married by the spring of 1578 (see Lady Mary Keys' will in Strype, John, *Annals of the Reformation and establishment of religion and other various occurrences in the Church of England during Queen Elizabeth's happy reign*, new edn, 2/2 (1824), pp. 210–11). The letter below would thus appear to date from July 1577, at a time when other documents indicate that the prospective marriage between Peregrine Bertie and Lady Mary de Vere was strongly disapproved of by Oxford, by Peregrine Bertie's parents, and apparently by the Queen herself. The letter implies that Peregrine Bertie was at the time confined to Willoughby House by his parents. 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'.

My own good Lady, I am not little grieved that I have not or [=ere] this time resolved the doubt I left you in, and so much the more as I fear it hath caused your unquietness, in whom I make more account of than of myself or life, and therefore resolve yourself that if I had had fit time I would not so slightly overpassed it. But the truth is, by other troubles I have yet heard nothing of that matter worthy the sending, yet did I think not to lose so much occasion, since I know not when to recover it again, as to let understand how uncourteously I am dealt with by my Lord, your brother, who, as I hear, bandeth against me and sweareth my death, which I fear nor force not but lest his displeasure should withdraw your affection towards me. Otherwise I think no way to be so offended as I cannot defend.

And thus, good Lady, persuade yourself no less than you shall find I will give cause or perform. Above all things, if you wish me well, let nothing grieve you, whatsoever you shall hear do hap. For my own part, my good or ill fortune consisteth only in you, whom I must request to accept as well this scribbled well meaning as better eloquence, excusing my imperfections with my troubled mind, which am locked up so fast as I could scarce get pen and paper to be the present messengers of my poor goodwill. And thus end a wilful(?) man, having received new occasion by your letter at this instant to trouble you more hereafter withal.

From Willoughby House. Yours more than his own, and so till his end.