

SUMMARY: The document below is a translation in the Calendar of State Papers Venetian of a letter written on 12 January 1605 by Nicolo Molino, the Venetian ambassador in England, to the Doge and Senate of Venice. In the letter Molino describes the wedding of Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan de Vere (1587-1629), to Philip Herbert (1584-1650), later Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, which took place on 27 December 1604.

Nicolo Molino was the Venetian ambassador in England from November 1603 to early 1606. See <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=94078>.

The transcript below is taken from Brown, Horatio F., ed., *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, Vol. X, 1603-1607 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900), pp. 206-7.

For the announcement of the forthcoming marriage in a letter written from London by John Chamberlain to Ralph Winwood on 18 December 1604, see McClure, Norman Egbert, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vol. I, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939) pp. 198-9.

For a description of the wedding festivities by Dudley Carleton in a letter to John Chamberlain on 7 January 1605, see Lee, Maurice, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624; Jacobean Letters*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972) pp. 66-8.

1605

Jan. 12

Original Despatch,
Venetian Archives

323. Nicolo Molin, Venetian Ambassador in England, to the Doge and Senate.

The eve of the Epiphany, St Stephen's day, old style, Sir Lewis Lewkenor, the receiver of ambassadors, visited me to tell me in his Majesty's name that the next day the marriage of Sir Philip Herbert, Groom of the Chamber and prime favourite of his Majesty, would be celebrated at court. Sir Philip is brother of the Earl of Pembroke, who is married to a niece of Secretary Cecil [sic?]. The King invited me to be present, and in the name of the couple begged me to honour their wedding. I replied that I felt highly flattered and would attend. I asked if any other ambassadors were to be invited. Sir Lewis replied that if they came at all it would be incognito so as to avoid all quarrel about precedence. I asked if I was to dine at the King's table. He said that detail was not yet settled, but that when he came to fetch me next morning he would tell me. This he did, and informed me that the King and Queen would dine in their own private apartments, and I would sit at

the bride and bridegroom's table along with the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Holstein. I enquired as to the arrangement of the guests, and Sir Lewis said the bride would take the head of the table, the Prince on her right, I opposite the Prince, and the Duke next me. The rest of the table would be filled with the Lords of Council and court officials with their wives.

This seemed to me a position sufficiently honourable for your Serenity's ambassador, so I went to court. After the service we took our places at table in the order explained. I could see that the Duke of Holstein was rather put out. After the banquet was over, and very sumptuous it was, everyone retired to his own apartments till the servants had prepared the room for dancing till suppertime. But so great was the crowd that dancing was out of the question, and so everybody kept his room till supper.

As suppertime approached someone said to me that the crush was so great that he feared they would not be able to serve it. Presently someone said that the bride had taken her place, but such was the confusion that many guests had left.

While I was waiting for the Chamberlain to conduct me to table, as he had done in the morning, I heard that the bride and the Prince were seated, and that the Duke had got my place. I had just sent one of my suite to see whether it was true when Sir Lewis arrived in a passion, swearing that he would go and find out what the Chamberlain meant by neglecting to conduct me to table. At that moment the Chamberlain himself appeared, and begged most earnestly to be pardoned, as the error was great, it was true, but it had happened through inadvertence. I replied that such errors were easily pardoned, but that I feared this was a ruse, and anyway, in order to avoid being exposed to further mistakes, I intended to go home. He implored me to wait till he had spoken to the King. I consented, but informed him positively that I would not attend the masquerade unless my place of the morning was secured for me.

Meantime they served me supper in Cecil's rooms, and presently there came thither Sir (Roger) Aston, gentleman-in-waiting to the King, to beg me in his Majesty's name to excuse the occurrence and to believe that it was entirely due to the crowd and confusion, and to say that he was waiting me in his own rooms to take me with him to the masquerade. I replied that I thanked the King, but that I was waiting an answer from the Chamberlain as to certain questions I had addressed to him. The Chamberlain shortly after appeared and said the King was still waiting me, and assured me that I should have my place. I accordingly went at once to the King's rooms, which I found full of ladies and the Lords of the Council. They one and all begged me not to take in bad part what was the result of pure accident, as I should presently be convinced.

At this moment their Majesties left the rooms. I bowed to them, and the King took me by the hand, and walking towards the hall where the masque was prepared, he said that in such a confusion it was impossible to avoid some such accident, but that I might rest assured that his intention was to do all honour to the representative of the Republic. I replied that the affection which the Republic bore to his person merited the regard he felt for her. With this we reached the hall of the masque, the Duke of Holstein walking in

front uncovered. We entered a box by five or six steps. In it were two chairs. The King took one, the Queen the other. A stool was prepared for me on the King's right, and another for the Duke on the Queen's left, but he would not sit down. He preferred to stand uncovered for the three hours the masque and *ballo* lasted. This has convinced me that the mistake was really an accident, or at least was not within the cognizance of his Majesty. If I had left the scene at once, as I first intended, I should not have discovered his Majesty's real feelings, nor demonstrated them to the whole court.

London, 12th January 1604 [m.v.]

[Italian]