

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter written from London by Dudley Carleton (1574-1632) to John Chamberlain (1553-1628) on 7 January 1605. In the letter Carleton describes the wedding on 27 December 1604 of Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan de Vere (1587-1629), to Philip Herbert (1584-1650), later Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery.

For a transcript of the letter, see also Lee, Maurice, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624; Jacobean Letters*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), pp. 66-8.

For the announcement of the forthcoming wedding 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 by Nicolo Molino, the Venetian ambassador, of his part in the day's events in a letter dated 12 January 1605, see 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.

The masque described in the letter was Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*. One of the ladies who performed in it was Oxford's daughter, Susan de Vere.

Sir, if your little messenger had come a day or two sooner he had come opportunely to have squired Sir William Cecil, now Knight of the Bath. How he sped yesterday I know not, for when I saw him on Saturday I gave him the best advice I could, and since never set eye on him but once that night when he was herded with the small game that follows the Prince, and in my opinion could not be better.

Our Christmas games are now at an end unless the Duke of Holstein come with an after-reckoning, who as they say hath somewhat in hand, and broges about for some others to bear part in the charge, which is not *bien séant à un prince*.

We began on Saint John's day [=27 December] with the marriage of Sir Philip and the Lady Susan, which was performed with as much ceremony and grace as could be done a favourite. The Prince and Duke of Holstein led the bride to church, the Queen followed her from thence, the King gave her, and she brided and bridled it so handsomely, and indeed became herself so well, that the King said if he were not married he would not give her, but keep her himself. There was none of our accustomed forms omitted of bridecakes, sops in wine, giving of gloves, laces and points which have been ever since the livery of the court, and at night there was sewing into the sheet, casting of the bride's left hose, and twenty other petty sorceries. They were married in the chapel, feasted in the

great chamber, and lodged in the council-chamber, where the King gave them in the morning before they were up a *reveille-matin* in his shirt and his nightgown, and spent a good hour with them in the bed or upon, choose which you will believe best.

The plate and presents that were given were valued at £2000, but that which the King gave made it a good marriage, which was a book of 500 land lying in the Isle of Sheppey (whereof Sir Edward Hoby had a lease) passed and delivered that day for the lady's jointure.

At night there was a masque performed by my Lord of Pembroke, my Lord Willoughby, Sir James Hay, Sir Robert Carey, Sir John Lee, Sir Richard Preston, Sir Thomas Germain and Sir Thomas Bager. Their conceit was a representation of Juno's temple at the lower end of the great hall, which was vaulted, and within it the masquers seated with store of lights about them, and it was no ill show. They were brought in by the four seasons of the year and Hymeneus, which for songs and speeches was as good as a play. Their apparel was rather costly than comely, but their dancing full of life and variety; only Sir Thomas Germain had lead in his heels and sometimes forgot what he was doing.

The Venetian ambassador was there present, and was a wedding guest all the day, but one thing he took ill, and not without cause, that being brought after dinner to the closet to retire himself, he was there forgotten, and suffered to walk out his supper, which he took afterwards privately in my Lord of Cranborne's chamber. The Spanish ambassador was there likewise, but disguised. The French ambassador, by reason of sickness, hath been a stranger at court all Christmas.

On Thursday last the Spaniard made a solemn dinner to the Duke of Holstein and the greatest part of the court. The ladies he presented with fans and gloves, and ended his entertainment with a play and a banquet.

On New Year's Day there was expectation of new creations both of marquises and earls, but they are put off till the Queen's lying down, which will be about three months hence at Greenwich.

Yesterday in the morning the little Charles was made great Duke of York. The ceremony was performed in the hall, and himself with his ornaments carried by nine earls. There were 11 Knights of the Bath besides Sir Charles himself and all of the King's choice, as namely the Lords Willoughby, Chandos, Compton and Norris; William Cecil, Allen Percy, Francis Manners, Thomas Somerset, Clifford, Howard and Harington. They were all lodged and feasted in the court for three days, and yesterday a public dinner was made in the great chamber, where was a table for the little Duke and the earls, and another apart for these new knights. The masque at night requires much labour to be well described, but there is a pamphlet in press which will save me that pains. Meantime you shall only know that the actors were the Queen, the Ladies Bedford, Suffolk, Derby, Rich, Herbert, Effingham, Susan, Elizabeth Howard, Bevill, Walsingham and Wroth. The presentation of the masque at the first drawing of the traverse was very fair, and their apparel rich, but too light and courtesan-like. Their black faces and hands, which were painted and bare up

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to the elbows, was a very loathsome sight, and I am sorry that strangers should see our court so strangely disguised. The Spanish and Venetian ambassadors were both there, and most of the French about the town. The confusion in getting in was so great that some ladies lie by it, and complain of the fury of the white staffs. In the passages through the galleries they were shut up in several heaps betwixt doors, and there stayed till all was ended, and in the coming out a banquet which was prepared for the King in the great chamber was overturned, table and all, before it was scarce touched. It were infinite to tell you what losses there were of chains, jewels, purses, and suchlike loose ware, and one woman amongst the rest lost her honesty, for which she was carried to the porter's lodge, being surprised at her business on the top of the terrace.

The court comes towards you on Wednesday next, and you will have these accidents more particularly related. Here is no news out of France since the last I showed you. The Duke in his passage, being bound for Dieppe, was driven up as high as Gravelines, and there forced to land and to march with his whole troop on foot as far as Calais, from whence he is gone overland. My Lord of Hertford is come up, and not knowing how to put off the journey to the Archduke, hath this day undertaken it. Our lieger into Spain takes state upon him, and is proud of the employment to which it was thought he would hardly have been entreated. Here have come of late many dispatches from our ambassador at Venice, and his doings not over well liked. Will you not wonder if I shall tell you that Sir Walter Cope is believed not only to aspire but to be in fair forwardness to the Secretaryship? I hope you have enough to entertain your thoughts withal, and therefore when I have told you that your friends are well here, and desired to be remembered where you are, I leave further to trouble you, and rest

Yours most assured,

Dudley Carleton

From London this 7th day of January 1604.

Endorsed: To my very loving friend, Mr John Chamberlain, gives these at Knebworth.