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SUMMARY: In this letter written from Hampton Court to John Chamberlain on 15 January 1603 [=1604], Dudley Carleton mentions the involvement of Oxford's daughters Elizabeth, Lady Derby, and Susan de Vere in festivities at court during the Christmas season. The transcript below is taken from Lee, Maurice, *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624; Jacobean Letters*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972) pp. 53-9.

Sir, I perceived by Sir Rowland Lytton that in this time of your good leisure a small matter will serve for good entertainment, and therefore I send you such idle stuff as I received last out of France, but you must take the copies no otherwise than as lent, though you may keep them as long as you please, and for interest, if they be worth it, I would gladly hear how you do in the country, and with what contentment you pass your time.

We have had here a merry Christmas, and nothing to disquiet us save brabbles amongst our ambassadors, and one or two poor companions that died of the plague. The first holidays we had every night a public play in the great hall, at which the King was ever present, and liked or disliked as he saw cause, but it seems he takes no extraordinary pleasure in them. The Queen and Prince were more the players' friends, for on other nights they had them privately, and have since taken them to their protection.

On New Year's night we had a play of Robin Goodfellow, and a masque brought in by a magician out of China. There was a heaven built at the lower end of the hall out of which our magician came down, and after he had made a long sleepy speech to the King of the nature of the country from whence he came, comparing it with ours for strength and plenty, he said he had brought in clouds certain Indian and China knights to see the magnificency of this court, and thereupon a traverse was drawn, and the masquers seen sitting in a vaulty place with their torch-bearers and other lights, which was no unpleasing spectacle. The masquers were brought in by two boys and two musicians, who began with a song, and whilst that went forward they presented themselves to the King. The first gave the King an impresa in a shield with a sonnet in a paper to express his device, and presented a jewel of £40,000 value which the King is to buy of Peter van Lore. But that is more than every man knew, and it made a fair show to the French ambassador's eye, whose master would have been well pleased with such a masquer's present, but not at that price. The rest in their order delivered their escutcheons with letters, and there was no great stay at any of them, save only at one who was put to the interpretation of his device. It was a fair horse-colt in a fair green field, which he meant to be a colt of Bucephalus' race, and had this virtue of his sire, that none could mount him but one as great at least as Alexander. The King made himself merry with threatening to send this colt to the stable, and he could not break loose till he promised to dance as well as Banks his horse. The first measure was full of changes, and seemed confused, but was well gone through withal, and for the ordinary measures they took out the Queen, the Ladies of Derby, Hertford, Suffolk, Bedford, Susan Vere, Southwell the elder, and Rich. In the

corantoes they ran over some other of the young ladies, and so ended as they began, with a song, and that done, the magician dissolved his enchantment and made the masquers appear in their likeness to be the Earl of Pembroke, the Duke, Monsieur d'Aubigny, young Somerset, Philip Herbert the young Bucephal, James Hay, Richard Preston, and Sir Henry Goodyere. Their attire was rich, but somewhat too heavy and cumbersome for dancers, which put them beside their galliards. They had loose robes of crimson satin embroidered with gold and bordered with broad silver laces, doublets and bases of cloth of silver, buskins, swords and hats alike, and in their hats each of them an Indian bird for a feather, with some jewels.

The twelfth day the French ambassador was feasted publicly, and at night there was a play in the Queen's presence, with a masquerade of certain Scotchmen who came in with a sword-dance, not unlike a matachin, and performed it cleanly. From thence the King went to dice into his own presence, and lost £500, which marred a gamester, for since he appeared not there, but once before was at it in the same place and parted a winner.

The Sunday following was the great day of Queen's masque, at which was present the Spanish and Polack ambassadors with their whole trains, and the most part of the Florentines and Savoyards, but not the ambassadors themselves, who were in so strong competition for place and precedence that to displease neither it was thought best to let both alone. The like dispute was betwixt the French and the Spanish ambassadors, and hard hold for the greatest honour, which the Spaniard thinks he hath carried away by being first feasted (as he was the first holiday, and the Polack the next) and invited to the greatest masque, and the French seems to be greatly discontented that he was flatly refused to be admitted to the last, about which he used unmannerly expostulations with the King and for a few days troubled all the court, but the Queen was fain to take the matter upon her, who as a masquer had invited the Spaniard as the Duke before had done the French, and to have them both there could not well be without bloodshed. The hall was much lessened by the works that were in it, so as none could be admitted but men of appearance. The one end was made into a rock, and in several places the waits placed, in attire like savages. Through the midst from the top came a winding stair of breadth for three to march, and so descended the masquers by three and three, which being all seen on the stairs at once was the best presentation I have at any time seen. Their attire was alike, loose mantles and petticoats, but of different colours, the stuffs embroidered satins and cloth of gold and silver, for which they were beholden to Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe. Their heads by their dressing did only distinguish the difference of the goddesses they did represent. Only Pallas had a trick by herself, for her clothes were not so much below the knee but that we might see a woman had both feet and legs, which I never knew before. She had a pair of buskins set with rich stones, a helmet full of jewels, and her whole attire embossed with jewels of several fashions. Their torch-bearers were pages in white satin loose gowns set with stars of gold, and their torches of white virgin wax gilded. Their *démarche* was slow and orderly, and first they made their offerings at an altar in a temple which was built on the left side of the hall towards the upper end. The songs and speeches that were there used I send you here enclosed. Then, after the walking of two rounds, fell into their measure, which for variety was nothing inferior, but had not the life as the former. For the common measures they took out the Earl of

Pembroke, the Duke, the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Henry Howard, Southampton, Devonshire, Sidney, Nottingham, Monteagle, Northumberland, Knollys and Worcester. For galliards and corantoes they went by discretion, and the young Prince was tossed from hand to hand like a tennis-ball. The Lady Bedford and the Lady Susan took out the two ambassadors, and they bestirred themselves very lively, especially the Spaniard, for his Spanish galliard showed himself a lusty old reveller. The goddesses they danced with did their parts, and the rest were nothing behindhand when it came to their turns, but of all for good grace and good footmanship, Pallas bore the bell away. They retired themselves toward midnight in order as they came, and quickly returned unmasked, but in their masquing attire. From thence they went with the King and the ambassadors to a banquet provided in the presence, which was dispatched with the accustomed confusion, and so ended that night's sport with the end of our Christmas gambols.

Since, the Savoyard hath dined privately with the King, and after dinner was brought out into the great chamber to see the Prince dance, and a nimble fellow vault. He then took his leave, but is not yet gone, and some doubt his leave-taking was but a cozenage to steal a dinner from the Florentine, who expected to be first entertained. The Spaniard and Florentine have not yet met, for they both stand upon terms, the one of his greatness, the other upon custom that the first comer should salute the other's welcome. The Polack doth this day feast the Spaniard. He hath taken his leave, and is presented with jewels and plate to the value of £2000. The valuation of the King's presents which he hath made to ambassadors since his coming into England comes to £25,000.

The Constable of Castile is come to Brussels, and hath sent a dispatch to the Spanish ambassador with a letter to the King from the King of Spain by which he writes that he hath given the Constable absolute authority to treat and conclude of peace, so as we shall now fall to this work, for this ambassador doth already begin to disgross the points of greatest difficulty, and hath once had audience to this purpose, and was met at his house at Richmond on Friday last by the Earls of Nottingham, Northumberland and Devonshire, the Lords Henry Howard and Cecil.

We have here at this present the chief of our clergy in consultation about church matters. Yesterday the bishops, with 4 or 5 of the deans, were in privy chamber before the King and Lords of the Council, to whom the King made a speech with great respect to them and their callings, and told them he sent not for them as persons accused, but as men of choice by whom he sought to receive instruction, and chiefly sought to be satisfied in the points of confirmation, absolution, excommunication and private baptism, and insisted somewhat upon the disorders of bishops' chancellors, to which the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the Bishops of Winchester and Durham, made mild and good answers, and the Bishop of London spake well to the purpose, but with too rough boldness. The deans, amongst whom was Westminster, were only hearers. In conclusion, the King seemed to be reasonably satisfied, only did wish some alteration of scandalous words in the Common Prayer Book, but the substance to remain, upon which he willed the bishops to advise, and return to him again on Wednesday next. Meantime Patrick Galloway and his crew shall have their turn, and tomorrow they appear before the King. These two companies, as they differ in opinions, so do they in fashions, for one side marches in

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gowns and rochets, and the other in cloaks and night-caps. Cartwright, a ringleader of these reformed *palliati*, is lately dead.

You have heard, I am sure, how Garter, the king of heralds, for behaving himself insolently in my Lord Spencer's company, is ungartered and deposed. Lesieur is newly come out of Germany, and Sir Anthony Standen out of Italy. They parted at Canterbury as they went, and there met in their return. Henry Wotton is come over with Sir Anthony Standen. Bulmer the alchemist is come out of Scotland, and brings with him certain ore of the gold-mine. There is a pack of coiners discovered in London of certain old Low Country captains and some others, whereof two are taken and the rest fled the country. It were a fit match to set these new coiners a-work upon the new gold, and so like to like, for there is little hope of this new discovery, though the Scotchmen compare it at least with the Indies, and the knights of the mine must needs go forward.

The King hath honoured his Knights of the Bath with a difference from the rest, having given to certain of them that live hereabout the court crimson ribbons with *médailles*, and leave to all other of that order that will be at the cost to come into the fashion. Young Peyton, the first of the King's knights, is the first disgraced Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, for he is put out of his place for entertaining intelligence betwixt Cobham and Raleigh at their first coming into the Tower, and Sir Henry Neville, the Lord Treasurer's son-in-law, is sworn in his place. Captain Kemys, a follower of Sir Walter Raleigh's who hath been kept close prisoner in the Tower from the beginning of those apprehensions, is set at liberty. Brookesby is to pay Sir Robert Mansfield £2500 to save his land, and it is thought the rest of the banished men will pass at like rates. The lords and Sir Walter have their lands and goods seized, and there is much ado to keep them in the King's hands undisposed. Sir John Ramsay hath gotten of the King a grant of Sir Walter's office of the wines, but the Lord Treasurer holds back to keep it for the King's use.

I have not heard from Mr Winwood this many a day, but I hear of him by Captain Ogle, who came lately from thence, that he holds up his horn and lives worshipfully. His Excellency hath been lately in the field upon some exploit which hath not succeeded, but we hear not what it is. Ostend is revictualled, and the governor and garrison changed. Colonel Gistelles is there in place of Vandernode. Sir Francis Vere doth stand upon high points with the States, and will either have absolute command of his English without subjection to his Excellency or any other, or return no more.

The town of Geneva hath lately escaped a surprise which was intended by the Savoyards with a ridiculous practice, yet likely enough to have been effected. One John Bernard, Lyonnais, had provided certain bars with hooks and engines suddenly to have closed doors, and had made sundry of his practice, when the Genevois were at their devotions, and their church doors this cold weather close shut upon them, to have made them fast, and there kept them sure whilst the enemy by scalado might enter. He was discovered by one whom he sought to make of his party, and upon his own confession condemned and executed.

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I know not anything I have more to add, either foreign or domestic, only I have omitted that we have new Maids of Honour, Mistresses Middlemore, Woodhouse, and Carew, and three more we shall have, as maids can be found fit for the purpose. The widow Norris is either married or made sure to Sir Thomas Erskine, the Captain of the Guard. She lies at Denham at Sir Henry Bowyer's, who was the chief match-maker, though Sir Thomas saith he takes the daughter upon the father's own tender, and that within few days after her husband's death she was his to take or leave. I pray you let me hear by this bearer how you do, what you do, and when you mean to be at London, and I will not fail to meet you. Meantime, with my best wishes and commendations I commit you to God.

Yours most assured.

[Dudley Carleton]