

Bess of Hardwick's Letters

Letter ID: 141 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=141>)

From: Arbella Stuart;

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: [29 January?] 1602/3

Summary: Arbella Stuart writes to her grandmother, Bess (dowager countess of Shrewsbury), what seems to be an apologetic letter (but also with the queen as a reader in mind) to 'set down the true reasons of this my proceeding' - namely to do with offences related to dealings for a match between her and the earl of Hertford's grandson. Dismissing the latter's 'discourteous dealing with me', Arbella invents a fictional lover, 'a noble gentleman whose name I conceal'. This (ID 141) is the sent letter written in Arbella's own hand; ID 142 is a contemporary copy made by one of Sir Robert Cecil's scribes.

Archive: Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, 135/139-141

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: Seal intact - no. Ribbon/floss - no.

Other version: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=142>)

Hands: Sir Robert Cecil | archivist | unknown scribe | Arbella Stuart |

Version: 1.0

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People Associated with Letter 141: Arbella Stuart

Arbella Stuart (1575-1615) was the daughter of Charles Stuart, earl of Lennox (1555/6-1576), and his wife, Bess's daughter, Elizabeth (née Cavendish; 1554-1582). By birth Stuart was cousin to King James VI/I and a potential heir to both the Scottish and English thrones. However, by 1582 both of Stuart's parents were dead and her inheritance passed to Elizabeth I. It is at this point that she moved in with Bess, her grandmother, who petitioned on her behalf (especially to do with her allowance from the queen) and had her highly educated in multiple languages. As she became a young woman, on house arrest for most of her life, Arbella proved a resentful and troublesome resident at Hardwick Hall, from which she devised several bizarre plots of escape (including the fabrication of a fictional lover) - a situation which caused Bess much unwanted stress in her later years (early 1600s). After Bess's death (1608), Arbella married William Seymour in 1610, against King James I's wishes, and she was banished to Durham. She attempted escape, but ended up in the Tower of London, where she fell ill and died in September 1615.

Other letters associated with Arbella Stuart:

8 February 1587/8 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=106>)

[29 January?] 1602/3 (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=142>)

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People Associated with Letter 141: Bess of Hardwick

Born Elizabeth Hardwick (in c.1521/2, d. 13 February 1608), the woman known to posterity as Bess of Hardwick married four times during her life, as a result of which her name changed from Hardwick to Barlow (or Barley), Cavendish, St Loe and then finally (when she was countess of Shrewsbury and then dowager countess) Talbot. As one of the five children of John Hardwick (1495-1528) of Hardwick, Derbyshire, and his first wife, Elizabeth (née Leake), Bess had three sisters (Mary, Jane and Alice) and one brother (James). The Hardwicks were established Derbyshire gentry who had inherited a modest manor house and c.400 acres in and around Hardwick. But when John died in 1528, and their lands were seized by the crown, Bess faced hardship. Bess's mother quickly remarried but her new husband, Ralph Leche of Chatsworth, Derbyshire, brought little land or money to the marriage, and three more daughters were born (Bess's half-sisters Elizabeth, Jane and Margaret). Little else is known of Bess's childhood but, while still young, she was married for the first time, to Robert Barlow (or Barley) of Barlow, Derbyshire, sometime in or before 1543. Barlow died in 1544 and Bess received a small inheritance. In 1547 she married the twice-widowed Sir William Cavendish, treasurer of the king's chamber. Bess and Cavendish had eight children, six of whom survived: Frances (1548), Henry (1550), William (1551, from whom the dukes of Devonshire are descended), Charles (1553, from whom the dukes of Newcastle and Portland are descended), Elizabeth (1554) and Mary (1556). Probably due to a mixture of affection and shared social ambition, Bess's second marriage was happy and fortuitous. She was now moving in courtly circles and experiencing (for the first time) considerable wealth. In 1549 Cavendish and Bess bought the estate of Chatsworth, which was held jointly in both their names and which he and then Bess, following Cavendish's death in 1557, ambitiously rebuilt. Soon after her second husband's death, and sometime before Elizabeth I's accession (in 1558), Bess married Sir William St Loe, a wealthy widower of ancient noble pedigree. St Loe was captain of the guard to the young queen and in addition to further improving Bess's finances, he also brought her into the queen's inner circle and she served briefly as a gentlewoman of the queen's privy chamber (in 1559). The marriage seems to have not been without affection; however, the two would have spent most of it apart - he serving the queen in London and Bess mostly at Chatsworth. Upon St Loe's death (probably in 1565), Bess inherited most of the estate. In 1567 Bess married for a final time, to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, one of the richest and most powerful men in England. To consolidate the union of their fortunes, the couple had Bess's eldest son, Henry, marry Shrewsbury's daughter (from his previous marriage), and Shrewsbury's eldest son, Gilbert (later the seventh earl), marry Bess's daughter, Mary. Also around this time, Shrewsbury was appointed to be the keeper of Mary Queen of Scots (from 1568-84). At first, relations between Bess and the Catholic Scottish queen seem to have been amicable; however, relations deteriorated all around as Bess's marriage to Shrewsbury broke down in the 1580s. An infamously nasty and highly public legal battle over estates ensued and finally the courts resolved that Shrewsbury provide Bess with a sizeable income from 1587 onwards (Shrewsbury died in 1590). In 1582, Bess took charge of the upbringing of her orphaned granddaughter, Arbella Stuart (1575-1615), claimant to the English

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and Scottish crowns. In 1587, Bess undertook her remarkable building works at Hardwick: the house now known as Hardwick Old Hall was complete by 1591; next to it, the extraordinary building now known as Hardwick New Hall was complete by 1599 and is one of the greatest architectural ventures of Elizabethan England. It was at Hardwick that Bess spent most of the remainder of her life, much of it devoted to caring for and managing Arbella, who came to loathe her existence in Derbyshire and devised several bizarre plans for her escape (to Bess's great distress). Bess also quarrelled with her eldest son, Henry, and disinherited both him and Arbella in her will. She left most of her estate to her beloved and faithful son, William Cavendish, who continued her great dynasty into the seventeenth century.

Normalised view of Letter 141

The Lady Arbellas first lettre

A

This ye old Lady sent vp

My Lady Arbellas Declaration to my Lady hir Graudmother

I aknowledge my selfe most bound to hir Majesty for hir [Majesties] grati[ou]s pardon of my offence, which appeareth more disgracefull in hir Majesties eyes your Ladyships and those .2. graue and honorable counsellors by whose letter it pleaseth hir Majesty to reprove my offence then it yet doth in the opinion of many others upon whose opinion I haue laid the foundation of all the rest of my life. Pardon me thearfore I beseech your Ladyship if with out those ceremonies which either through ignorance, or anxiety of a minde yet distracted between feare and hope, I sett downe the true reasons of this my proceeding. To imploy any, much more such base and unworthy persons in such a matter, had binne a blott to my reputation neuer to be washed away with floods of repentant teares, if my intent had not binne to haue it knowne to hir Majesty that such a matter was propounded seriously, and by somm desired, by others not disliked. but utterly neglected, or reiected by my selfe from the first howre I heard of it, till the last and not more then at the firs[t] now for all my Lord of Hartfords discourteous dealing with me who have deserued better at his hands. and thearfore restraining my friends I respected, I sent such as I thought likeliest to displease his Lordship though I instructed them not to giue his Lordship iust cause of offence, and aduentured no more, then I was desirous they should diuulge so it weare with out my consent, for in truth I cannot finde in my hart to disclos[e] the counsell of any stranger or enemy that either by theyr consent or chanceably commeth to my knowledge if it may be or I do but doubt it may be preiudiciall to them. And I thanck God it fell out better then I and my dearest and besttrusted whatsoever he be could hau[e] deuised or imagined though we haue bett our braines about it these .3. yeares.. The ridiculous and contemptuous stile I beseech you excuse with the reasons which this gentleman who taught it me alledged before he could perswade me to play the foole in good earnest. It was conuenient hir Majesty should see and beleue, what busy bodies, untrue rumor[s], uniuist practises, coulorable and cunning deuises, are in remote partes against those whom the world understand to be in a sort exiled hir Majesties presence undeseruedly, though them selues be neue[r] so wary or unwilling any should so much as speake of them. and as hearin[g] your Ladyships wisdom and fidelity hath binne at least comparable with my Lord of Hartfords, so I haue many [good] wittnesses and more then for theyr owne sakes I would I had had that I haue binne as precise and circumspect in auoiding all occasions either of alluring, or encouraging any to reueile theyr affection how great so euer how respectiuey so ever, how well so euer loued or like[d] by my selfe, and whosoever hath made triall what would either perswade the most vertuous Lady, or the greatest Lady for [so] by the[yr] commaundment I must needes tell your Ladyship they will needes say and sweare I am the one of theyr knowledge and they could wish me in the highest degree of hir Maiesties fauour, and put me in hope if euer I may attaine hir Majesties presence I shall receiue the like gracious

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countenance for all this that I haue euer donne. They I say who haue made most triall what promises, othes, vowes, threatnings, unkindnesse kindnesse faire meanes and fowle, neglect of others, with drawing of comfort, counsell, hope of redresse or any other thing in the world could constraine or entice one of my sex, yeares, and hitherto unhappy fortune Can beare me witnesse that I am too stout to request fauour till I be sure I may command it and they [will] take it as a fauour donne to them and not to me of whom they craue not so much as thanckes I assure your Ladyship nor any thing in the world but loue in such honorable and Christian sort, as I weare to be condemned by your Ladyship especially, if for your Ladyships comfort and my owne aduancement, I should still haue reiected or like a deafe Aspe stopped my eares against his voice, who neuer requested any thing but was more for my good and honour then his owne. All the iniuries he could he hath donne me, and h[is] credit being as he right well deserues great with hir Majesty and his frends ... I impute euen all my wrongs to him and freely forgiue them all who haue binne his (unwitting I am sure) perchance unwilling instruments and if they had knowne by whom, to what end they weare imploied as I thinck uery few if any, for secrecy is one of his uertues and he hath as many as I beleue any subiect or forrein Prince in all Europe or more. The onely request that euer I made to him (many other thinges I haue in rude and unciuill manner bid him do, and he can take nothing ill at my hand but one as he protesteth and I am as sure as one can be of any mortall creature that he knoweth the valew of an oth and esteemeth it the pawne of his soule) that he would procure my remoue from out of your Ladyships custody, not that I would not thinck my selfe most happy to spend all my life under your Ladyships gouernement, but that I cannot rule loue and ambition in others as I thanck God I can do both uery well in my selfe, and in truth am not infected at all with the latter, nor so apt to to beleue and soudainely to resolue in so important a matter as I was content it should seeme to my Lord of Hartford. of purpose and not by error I protest. As I may compare the loue of this worthy Gentleman (which I haue already unreuocably accepted and confirmed, and will neuer deny nor can[not] nor will repent whatsoeuer befall) to gold which hath binne so often purified that I cannot finde one fault to [me] Ielousy onely excepted, so I haue dealt unkindely shrowdly proudly with him, and if any liuing haue cause to thinck me proud or shrowd it is he, whom I haue loued too well (euen since I could loue) to hide any thought word or deede of mine from him unlesse it weare, to aw him a little when I thought his loue conuerted into hate for I did him the wrong to thinck so a great while, [or] to make him weary of his Ielousy by letting him see it was the onely way to make me fall out with him and anger him in the highest degree I could imagine. with my Lord of Hartford I haue dealt so precisely that it hath neither binne in his powre to do me more hurt then reueale all he knew by me nor should haue cause or colour to take any thing so kindly to keepe my counsell. When I writt I wept and I maruell it was not perceiued, for I could neither forbear weeping at meale times nor in truth day nor night till I had performed my promise and sett downe in good and orderly sort somm of the seuerall deuises and shiftes which more then one had deuised and practised with out either my knowledge till it was past, or allowance either for what was past or to comm and this party who trusts me with more then I would haue him euen the secretest thoughts of his heart hath not nor neuer had so

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much as a promise that I would keep his counsell. He taught me by the example of Samuell that one might pretend on errand and deliuer an other with a safe conscience. By the example of Sampson that one might and (if they be not too foolish to liue in this world) must speake riddles to theyr frends and try the truth of offred loue and unsuspected frends in somm matter whearin if they deale unfaithfully it shall but make theyr ridiculous mallice appeare to they[r] owne discredit and no manner of hurt to others. He assured me hir Majesties offense would be conuerted into laughter when hir Majesty should see the honest cunning of the contriuer, to such an end as will be highly to hir Majesties likeing and your Ladyships and my. good many waies. He told me he would haue me enter into somm great action to winne my selfe reputation, try hir Majesties loue to me though neither of us doubted of it, try what my frends would do for me, and how I could imploy my frends and seruants, and make strangers to me effect my desires without being beholden to them. and building my hopes upon the rock lett the windes and billowes and tempests show that though my building be low yet it is not building upon the sand for then had I binn ruined. but like the wise Architect who first draweth his platt and after makes an estimate of the charges giuing somm allowance more then he thinckes will be needfull, and then finding him selfe able to go through cheerfully setteth his workmen to theyr seuerall workes. So we first did deliberately consult, and after speedely execute, that which we knew for a short time would be offensiue to hir Majesty your Ladyship the Earle of Hartford, and diu[ers] others, and worke an effect which I am most assured will be most acceptable to hir Majesty and it is euen the best seruice that euer Lady did hir Soueraigne and Mistresse. I am more desirous hir Majesty should understand euery part and parcell of the deuise, euery Acttor, euery action, euery word and sillable of that hir Majestie hath under my hand or Iohn Goods then your Ladyship is, because I know more then your Ladyship doth or shall (becaus[e] it is most for your Ladyships honour and good it should be so) till hir Majesty be aquainted and fully satisfied that I haue donne nothing foolishly, rashly, or falsely, or unworthy of my selfe. Thearfore I humbly thanck hir Majesty for that liberty it pleaseth hir High[ness] to allow me by the which I may conferre with my frends without which I could not discouer the trueth so soone and so well to hir Majesty as I trust to do, if it please hir Majesty to allow me the space of one moneth to cleare my selfe in, and liberty to send to any priuy counseller, I will be accountable to hir Majesty but not to your Ladyship for all that euer I did in my Life or euer will do. And I will reueile somm secrettes of loue concerning my selfe and somm others which will be delightfull to hir Majesty to understand. I will send somm to complaine of them selues, I will informe hir Majesty of somm matters whearof hir Majesty hath yet no manner of suspicion. I will offend none but my vncler of Shrouesbury, my Aunt and my vncler Charles, and them I will anger as much as euer they angred me and make my selfe as merry at them as the last lent they did at theyr owne pleasant deuice for so I take it of the gentleman with ye red eyes, and if they will as they ought in duty reconcile them selues to your Ladyship your Ladyship shall commaund me to forgett all iniuries they haue donne me one onely excepted and that is the wronges they haue donne this most worthy gentleman for whom I haue already forsaken parents, kinne, and all the world hir Majesty onely excepted. For I vow as I shall be saued he telles me plainely he will not offend hir Majesty for my sake, and

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will rather forsake me for euer then incurre hir Majesties displeasure though the time be neuer so short. and thearfore though I haue kept his counsell these many yeares and will do whilest I liue, if it may be the least hurtfull to him or any of his (for I neuer acquainted any of mine one or other I take God to witnesse) so I thinck it long till I may lett hir Majesty know his name who so farre exceedeth all the examples of hir Highnesse best fauored, that he dare not see nor but by stealth send to hir that he loues as well as euer they did any. And if it please hir Majesty so to accept of him I shall thinck my selfe most happy if hir Majesty will grace him with hir fauor and winne his heart form me if it be possible, and I will dayly pray for hir Majesty and him that he may dayly deserue hir Majesties fauour more and more as I do know he will indeauour, and if it please hir Majesty to giue me but liberty to send to him, and heare from him (which in truth (I must do and he will do though it offend your Ladyship and can do whosoeuer ouersee us) I will show your Ladyship euery letter of his I shall hereafter receaue and be content ... your Ladyship shall reueale all that to your Ladyships knowledge passeth betwixt us not onely to hir Majesty, but to all the world, for I am so farre from being ashamed of my choise, that euen for my owne honour sake I could finde in my heart to reueile him but that in truth I dare not without his consent and he dare not till he haue his pardon for him selfe and his frends signified unto me by hir Majesties letter which after I am to send to him and heare from him againe, and then he shall either him selfe by what meanes it pleaseth him acquaint hir Majesty with his fearfull presumption, or I will tell your Ladyship upon condition it may please your Ladyship to ioine with me in begging hir Majesties gracious pardon to certein offendours, whose penance shall be to make confession first to hir Majesty and after to your Ladyship how gladly they would haue offended your Ladyship and how farre they haue offended hir Majesty for my sake and if they receiue the sentence of death out of hir Majesties mouth I dare answer for them they shall dy content, but I trust hir// Highnesse will with a smile deride theyr follies, and at one of theyr handes accept a poore present I am in hand with for hir Majesty giue another leaue to deliuer a message or letter to hir sacred Majesty from me hir then fully absolued handmaide, and giue us all leaue to impart our ioy at hir Majesties pardon to us all one to another, and deuise the best manner how to represent to hir Majesty the ioy we conceiue thearof and make our selues merry with makeing our selues perfect in our partes, which for want of conference we haue partly forgotten, and partly understand not, and hir Majesty more merry if it please hir highnesse but to keepe our counsell, and I will instruct them and send them to hir Majesty one after another and none liuing shall understand my drift but hir Majesty the noble Gentleman whose name I conceale and whom it pleaseth them two to acquaint with out limitation. One onely suite will I make to hir Majesty whearin I most humbly craue your Ladyship to assist and further me that is that it may please hir Majesty to suspend hir highnesse iudgement of me till hir Majesty see the end which cannot be so soone as I could wish for I thinck euery minute long but shall be hastened as much as may be I assure your Ladyship on my faith. and surcease hir displeasure to my selfe and all those with whom for my sake I doubt hir Highnesse is offended. and suffer none of them whose names hir Majestie hath under my hand to comm or send to me unlesse I send for them and whosoeuer comm to me at my request or unsend for either I will acquaint

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your Ladyship or send them up poste or cause them to aduertise som priuy counseller what they do at my request to what [end.] I trust I haue fully satisfied your Ladyship that I am neither so disobedient nor inconsiderat as your Ladyship might thinck me, and because I report many thinges which to your Ladyship seeme impossible your Ladyship next under hir Majesty shall censure all my proceedings, when your Ladyship by hir Majestyes gracious letter or messenger unfoldeth these darke speeches which let others do as please them I will neuer reueale but to hir Majesty neither will I presume to present my vnworthy seruice to hir Majesty till it shall please hir Highnesse to commaund it, for somm reasons whearwith I will with all speed aduertise hir Majesty Whom the Lord blesse and prosper for euer euey way.

Arbella Stuart.

Diplomatic view of Letter 141

[Address Leaf]

The Lady
Arbellas first
lre

A

This y^c old
Lady sent vp

[Overleaf]

[Overleaf: Notes]

184 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

My Lady Arbells Declaration
to my Lady hir Graudmother

[Letter Text]

[Letter Text: Notes]

139 [Item number, hand: archivist]

181 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

40 [Item number, hand: archivist]

182 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

141 [Item number, hand: archivist]

183 [Foliation, hand: archivist]

I aknowledge my selfe most bound to hir Ma^{ty} for hir ^{^...^} grati...s pardon of
my offence, which appeareth more disgracefull in hir Ma^{ties} eyes your La^{ps} and
those .2. graue and honorable counsellors by whose letter it pleaseth hir Ma^{ty}
to reprooue my offence then it ^{^ pardoninge it yet^} doth in the opinion of ~~the world~~ many others
upon whose opinion I haue laid the foundation of all the rest of my life.

Pardon me thearfore I beseech your y^e La if w^t out those ceremonies which either ~~thr~~
through ignorance, or anxiety of ^{^a^} minde yet distracted between feare and hope, I
sett downe the true reasons of this my proceeding. To imploy any, much more such

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base and unworthy persons in such a matter, had binne a blott to my reputatio
neuer to be washed away w^t floods of repentant teares, if my intent had not binne
to haue it knowne ^{^to hir Ma^{ty} ^} that such a matter was propounded seriously, and by som
desired, by others not misliked. but utterly neglected, or reiected by my selfe
from the first howre I heard of it, till the last and not ^{^more then at the firs...^} now more for all my
Lo of Hartfords discourteous dealing w^t me who have deserued better at his
hands. and thearfore restraining my frends I respected, I sent such as I
thought fittest likeliest to displease his Lo though I instructed them not to giue
his Lo iust cause of offence, and aduentured no more, then I was desirous they should
diuulge so it weare w^t out my consent, for in truth I cannot finde in my hart to disclos...
the counsell of any stranger or enimy that either by theyr consent or chanceably
cometh to my knowledge if it may be ^{^or I do but doubt it may be^} preiudiciall to them. And I
thanck God it
fell out better then I and my dearest and besttrusted whatsoeuer he be could hau...
deuised or imagined though we haue bett our braines about it these .3. yeares..
The *[deletion]* ridiculous and contemptuous stile I beseech you excuse w^t the
reasons which this gentleman who taught it me alledged before he could pswade
me to play the foole in good earnest. It was conuenient hir Ma^{ty} should see and
beleuee, what busy bodies, untrue rumor..., uniuert practises, coulorable *[deletion]* and
cunning deuises, are in remote partes ^{amonge ^against^} those whom the world understad
to be in a sort exiled hir Ma^{ties} presence undeseruedly, though them selues be neu...
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your La^{ps} wisdom is ^{^and fidelity hath binne at least^} comparable w^t my Lo of Hartfords, so I haue
many ...
wittnesses and more then for theyr owne sakes I would I had had that I
haue binne as precise and circumspect in auoiding all occasions either
of alluring, or encouraging any to reueile theyr affection how *[deletion]* ^{^great^} so euer
how respectiuey so euer, how well so euer loued or like...

[page break]

by my selfe, and whosoeuer hath made triall what *[deletion]* would either
perswade the most vertuous Lady, or the greatest Lady for ... by the...
comaundment I must needes tell your La^p they will needes say and
swear I am the one of theyr knowledge and they could wish me in
the highest degree of hir Mai^{ties} fauour, and put me in hope if euer I may
attaine hir Ma^{ties} presence I shall receiue the like gracious countenance for
all this that I haue euer donne. They I say who haue made most

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triall what promises, othes, vowes, threatnings, unkindnesse kindnesse faire
meanes and fowle, neglect of others, w^t drawing of comfort, counsell, hope
of redresse or any other thing in the world could constraine or entice one of my
sex, yeares, and ^{hitherto} unhappy fortune Can beare me witnesse that I am too
stout to request fauour till I be sure I may comand it and they ...
take it as a fauour donne to them and not to me of whom they craue not
so much as thanckes I assure your La^p nor any thing in the world but loue
in such honorable and Christian sort, as I weare to be condemned by yr
La^p especially, if for your La^{ps} comfort and my owne aduancement, I should
still haue reiected or like a deafe Aspe stopped my eares against his
voice, who neuer requested any thing but was more for my good and
honour then his owne. All the iniuries he could he hath donne me, and
h... credit being as he right well deserues great w^t hir Ma^{ty} and his frends
... I impute euen all my wrongs to him and freely forgiue them and all
who haue binne his (unwitting I am sure) pchance unwilling instruments
and if they had knowne by whom, to what end they weare imploied as I
thinck uery few if any, for secrecy is one of his uertues and he hath
as many as I beleue any subiect or forrein Prince in all Europe or more.
The onely request that euer I made to him (many other thinges I haue
in rude and unciuill manner bid him do, and he can take nothing ill at my
hand but one as he protesteth and I am ^{as} sure as one can be of any mortall
creature that he knoweth ^{the valew of an oth} and esteemeth it the pawne of his soule) that he
would procure my remoue from out of ^{my} your La^{ps} custody, not that I would
not thinck my selfe most happy to spend all my life under your La^{ps}
gouernement, but that I cannot rule loue and ambition in others as I thanck
God I can do both uery well in my selfe, and in truth am not
infected at all w^t the latter, nor so apt to

[page break]

to *[deletion]* beleue and soudainely to resoluue in so important a matter as I
was content it should seeme to my Lo of Hartford. of purpose and not by error
I protest. As I may compare the loue of this worthy Gentleman (which I haue
already unreuocably accepted and confirmed, and will neuer deny nor can...
nor will repent whatsoeuer befall) to gold which hath binne so often
purified that I cannot finde one fault ^{to} ^{...} Ielousy onely excepted, so I
haue dealt unkindely shrowdly proudly w^t him, and if any liuing haue
cause to thinck me proud or shrowd it is he, whom I haue loued too
well (euen since I could loue) to hide any thought word or deede of

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mine from him unlesse it weare, to aw him a little when I thought his loue conuerted into hate for I did him the wrong to thinck so a great while, ... to make him weary of his Ielousy by letting him see it was the onely way to make me fall out w^t him and anger him in the highest degree I could imagine. w^t my Lo of Hartford I haue dealt so precisely that it hath neither binne ⁱⁿ his powre to do me more hurt then reueale all he knew by me nor ^{should} haue cause or coulour to ^{take} it any thing so kindly to keepe my counsell. When I writt I wept and I maruell it was not perceiued, for I could neither forbear weeping at meale times nor in truth day ^{and} ^{nor} night till I had performed my promise and sett downe in good and orderly sort ^{som of} the seuerall deuises and shiftes which more then one had deuised and practised w^t out either my knowledge till it was past, or allowance either for what was past or to com and this gentleman ^{party} who trusts me w^t more then I would haue him euen the secretest thoughts of his heart hath not ^{nor} neuer had ^{so} much as a promise that I would keep his counsell. He taught me by the example of Samuell that one might ptend on errand and deliuer an other w^t a safe conscience. By the example of Sampson that one might and (if they be not too foolish to liue in this world) must speake riddles to theyr frends ~~which~~ and try the truth of offred loue and unsuspected frends in som matter whearin if they deale unfaithfully it shall but make theyr ridiculous mallice appeare to they... owne discreditt and no manner of hurt to others. He assured me hir Ma^{ties} offense would be conuerted into laughter when hir Ma^{ty} should see the ^{honest} cunning of the contriuer, to such an end as will be highly to hir Ma^{ties} likeing and my La my Grandm^e your Laps and my. good many waies. He told me he would

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haue me enter into som great action to winne my selfe reputation, try hir Ma^{ties} loue to me though neither of us doubted of it, try what my frends would do for me, and how I could employ *[deletion]*

my frends and seruants, and make *[deletion]* strangers to me effect my desires w^t out being beholden to them. and building my hopes upon the rock lett the windes and billowes and tempests show that though my building be low yet it is not building upon the sand for then had I binn ruined. but like the wise Architect who first draweth his platt and after makes an estimate of the charges giuing som allowance more then he thinckes will be needfull, and then finding him selfe able to go through cheerfully setteth his workmen to theyr seuerall workes. So we first did deliberately consult, and after speedely execute, that which we knew

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for a short time would be offensiuē to hir Ma^{ty} your La^p the Earle of Hartford, and diu... others, and worke an effect which I am most assured will be most acceptable to hir Ma^{ty} and it is euen the best seruice that euer Lady did hir Soueraigne and Mistresse. I am more desirous hir Ma^{ty} should understand euey part and parcell of the deuise, euey Acctor, euey action, euey word and sillable of that hir Ma^{tie} hath under [deletion] ^{^my^} hand or Iohn Goods then your La^p is, because I know more then your La^p doth or shall (becaus... it is most for your La^{ps} honour and good it should be so) till hir Ma^{ty} be aquainted and fully satisfied that I haue donne nothing foolishly, rashly, or falsely, or unworthy of my selfe. Thearfore I humbly thanck hir Ma^{ty} for that liberty it pleaseth hir High... to allow me by the which I may conferre w^t my frends w^t out which I could not discouer the trueth so soone and so well to hir Ma^{ty} as I trust to do, if it please hir Ma^{ty} to allow me the space of one moneth to cleare my selfe in, and liberty to send to any priuy counseller, I will be accountable to hir Ma^{ty} but not to your La^p for all that euer I did in my Life or euer will do. And I will reueile som secrettes of loue concerning my selfe and som others which will be delightfull to hir Ma^{ty} to understand. I will send som to complaine of them selues, I will informe hir Ma^{ty} of som matters whearof hir Ma^{ty} hath yet no manner of suspition. I will offend none but my vnclē of Shrouesbury, my Aunt and my vnclē Charles, and them I will anger as much as euer they angred me and make my selfe as merry at them as the last lent they did at theyr owne pleasant deuice ^{^for so I take it^} of the gentleman w^t y^e red eyes, and if they will as they ought in duty reconcile them selues to your La^p your La^p shall comaund me to forgett all iniuries they haue donne me one onely excepted and that is the wronges they haue donne this most worthy gentleman for whom I haue already forsaken parents, kinne, and all the world hir Ma^{ty} onely excepted. For I vow as I shall be saued he telles me plainly

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he will not offend hir Ma^{ty} for my sake, and will rather forsake me for euer then incurre hir Ma^{ties} displeasure though the time be neuer so short. and thearfore though I haue kept his counsell these many yeares and will do whilest I liue, if it may be the least hurtfull to him or any of his (for I neuer acquainted any ^{^of mine^} one or other I take God to witnesse) so I thinck it long till I may lett hir Ma^{ty} know his name who so farre exceedeth ^{^all^} the examples of hir Highnesse best fauored, that he dare not see nor but by stealth send to hir that he loues as well as euer they did any. And if it please hir Ma^{ty} so to accept of him I shall thinck my selfe most happy if hir Ma^{ty} will grace him w^t hir fauor

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and winne his heart form me if it be possible, and I will dayly pray for hir Ma^{ty} and him that he may dayly deserue hir Ma^{ties} fauour more and more as I do know he will indeauour, and if it please hir Ma^{ty} to giue *[deletion]* me but liberty to send to him, and heare from him (which in truth (I must do and he will do *[deletion]* though it offend your La^p and can do whosoeuer ouersees us) I will show your La^p euery letter *[deletion]* of his I shall hereafter receaue & and be content ... your La^p shall reueale it all that to your Ma La^{ps} knowledge passeth betwixt us not onely to hir Ma^{ty} , but to all the world, for I am so farre from being ashamed of my choise, that euen for my owne honour sake I could finde in my heart to reueile him but that in truth I dare not w^t out his consent and he dare not till he haue his pardon for him selfe and his frends signified unto me by hir Ma^{ties} letter which after I am to send to him and heare from him againe, and then he shall either him selfe by *[deletion]* what meanes it pleaseth him acquaint hir Ma^{ty} w^t his fearfull presumption, or I will *[deletion]* tell your La^p upon condition it may please your La^p to ioine w^t me in begging *[deletion]* hir Ma^{ties} gracious pardon to certein offendours, whose penance shall be to make confession first to ~~your~~ hir Ma^{ty} and after to your La^p how gladly they would haue offended your La^p and how farre they haue offended hir Ma^{ty} for my sake and if they receiue the sentence of death out of hir Ma^{ties} mouth I dare answer for them they shall dy content, but I trust hir// Highnesse will w^t a smile deride theyr follies, and at one of theyr handes accept a poore present I am in hand w^t for hir Ma^{ty} ~~at anot~~ giue another leaue to deliuer a message or letter to hir sacred Ma^{ty} from me hir then fully

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absolued handmaide, and giue us all leaue to impart our ioy at hir Ma^{ties} pardon to us all one to another, and devise the west best manner how to represent to hir Ma^{ty} the ioy we conceiue thearof and make our selues merry w^t makeing our selues perfect in our partes, which for want of conference we haue partly forgotten, and partly understand not, and hir Ma^{ty} more merry if it please hir highnesse but to keepe our counsell, and I will instruct them and send them to hir Ma^{ty} one after another and none liuing shall understand *[deletion]* ^{^my^} drift but hir Ma^{ty} the noble Gentleman whose name I conceale and whom it pleaseth them two to acquaint wt out limitation. One onely suite will I make to hir Ma^{ty} wherin I most humbly craue your La^p to *[deletion]* assist and further me that is that it may please hir Ma^{ty} to suspend hir highnesse iudgement

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of me till hir Ma^{ty} see the end which cannot be so soone as I could wish for I thinck every minute long but shall be hastened as much as may be I assure your La on my faith. and surcease hir displeasure to my selfe and all those *[deletion]* w^t whom for my sake I doubt hir Highnesse is offended. and suffer none of them whose names hir Ma^{tie} hath under my hand to com or send to me unlesse I send for them *[deletion]* and whosoeuer com to me at my request or unsent for either I will acquaint your La or send them up poste or cause them to aduertise som priuy counseller what they do at my request to what ... I trust I haue fully satisfied your La^p that I am neither so disobedient nor inconsiderat as your La^p might thinck me, and because the I report many thinges which to your La^p seeme *imps* impossible your La next under hir Ma^{ty} shall censure all my proceedings, when your La^p by hir Ma^{tyes} gracious letter or messenger unfoldeth these darke speeches which let others do as please them I will neuer reueale but to hir Ma^{ty} neither will I presume to present my vnworthy seruice to hir Ma^{ty} till it shall please hir Highnesse to comaund it, for som reasons wherw^t I will w^t all speed aduertise hir Ma^{ty} Whom the Lord blesse and prosper for euer euery way.

Arbella Stuart.

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