

**The Character of the Incomparable Lady, the
Countess of Carlisle, and the Most Excellent
Lord, the Earl of Northumberland (No date)**

Transcript

British Library, Hargrave MS 226, ff. 236r–243r

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The: Character Of the incomperable Ladye, the Countesse of Carlile; And the most excellent Lord, The Earle of Northumberland.

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The Character Of the incomperable, Ladye, the Countesse of Carlile.

The person[n] of this Ladye, is verye extraordinarye, whether yow respect the Braverye of hir Stature, or the Beautye of hir Shape, The grace of hir moc[i]on, or the superioritye of hir Aspect, wherof noe parte is disadvantaged, by hir Curyous, Costlye, and ffreshe Attire, wch., noe Creature by the waye, cann putt on, lyke hir, whereby wee, easelye see, howe they are att much losse, whoe haue the Ill lucke to stand by hir ~~whereby, Wee easelye see,~~ Butt though hir exteriors bee such, as Men Admyre, And as the weaker sorte of woemen, is sorrye, through envye, that it cannott taxe; yett Certainlye the ffacultyes, and operac[i]ons of hir Brayne. are much more Admyrable, then theis [*Left margin:* qu. holdinge] others, ffor shee hath a happie, and houldinge Memorye, a quicke ffancye, a deepe, and sollid Judgm[en]te: though it rayther exceed in the waye of orderinge, then Actinge, But, howsoever it is soe ffarre beyound hir Sex, that it maye goe ffor a Rarietye, when wee ffinde any in ours, w[hi]ch maye exceed it, wthall, shee hath a verye quiett mynde, and yow shall hardlye ever see, Passions, soe much as pretend to Tripp: upp the heeles [*Left margin:* scarce] of hir Reason[n], nor scarce make hir expresse hir selfe much Lowder, or more eagerly att one tyme, then another:

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another, ffor shee eyther is still the same, or yf not, yow wilbee bound to watch hir very narrowlye; ffor els it shalbee more, then yow will knowe; For [*Left margin:*x] all that worke of Crose-stick , lyes Belowe, and is overshadowed wth an even, and smooth vayle, aboue.

Butt, hir Speech, is that, w[hi]ch of all thinges in [*Left margin:*x] hir, I admyre most, since it hath theis two incompatible partes, of beinge very easye, and very exacte; yow shall never ffinde a worde, or phrase, ffall, ffrom hir, w[hi]ch hath any thinge in it, of the meane, and w[hi]ch takes not a full Tincture, ffrom hir Breedinge, and Birth In hir owne discription of other p[er]sons, and Relac[i]ons of passages, w[hi]ch occur, shee is incomparable, ffor shee speakes w[i]th greate lyfe, greate elegancye, greate proprietye, and greate ffacillitye, and in my whole lyfe, I haue never ^{once} ~~over~~ heard hir in discourse, ^{correct} any worde of hir owne, nor seen hir shewe, that shee was mistaken, in whatt shee had said, nor wishe^d att the instant, that shee used som[m]e {latter } worde, upp on a second thought. A, Case, very Rare, and wch, I cannott, but wth truth affyrme, in it selfe, to haue ever mett in any other, eyther Man, or Woeman, though yett in my tyme I haue Conversed, w[i]th Persons, whoe were greate:

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greate Maisters: in poynte of Speech:

For, as much, as Concerneth thinges of Morallitye, they are generallye very excellent, in hir, though yett I hould them to bee accompanied, w[i]th som[m]e {error} I doe inffalliblye, hould hir to bee; and to haue ever been, most p[er]fectlye Chast, ffor wch, I must yett not thing^cke hir soe, Because, I thincke hir nature, is not to bee inclin'd, to love any Creature of the worlde extreamlye, in a delightffull waye; she cann Love Noblye, in the waye of ffrindshipp, Princelye in the waye of Courte, Obligeinglye in the waye of doeinge ffavors, Pleasinglye in the waye of Conversac[i]on, But, shee cannot Love, I thincke delightffullye; or dotinglye, in the waye of fflesh, and Bloode, Though god Almightye should bidd hir, As betwene Man, and wyfe, But, as ffor sinns against Chastitye, shee hath another Antidote stronge enough, ffor even vyce, shall keep hir, ffrom loosinge virtue; The pryde of hir harte, not sufferinge hir, to admitt of externall submissions, ffor the obtayninge of invisible delight[es].

The: Error w[hi]ch perhappes som[m]e fformall person[n]s maye esteeme hir to Com[m]itt against opinyon, is, that Contempnes, and Correct[es] inveterate Custom[m]e w[i]th to highe a hand, and neyther Care, nor ffeares:

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ffeares and p[er]happs takes not the paynes; soe much, as to suspect whatt the world cann saye of thing[es], yf in themselves, they bee noe waye ill: Shee disdaynes to prevent ffoolishe suspitions, and much more to satisfye them afterwarde, And, shee Cares not to Cutt the threed even enough, betwene opinyon, and Truth, But knoweinge the strength of hir owne harte, shee will admitt noe ffeare, or doubt, to putt hir selfe single att any tyme, into any place, w[i]th any person[n], whoe is a Man of honnor: and proffesseth Civilitye:

This: hath bredd som[m]e tymes in Men of ignoraunce, and woemen of envye, vayne discourse, And I haue been Content to call hir waye, erronious, not yett, that Reallye, and in it selfe, I thincke it such, But, because the world, w[hi]ch by noe meanes cann bee beaten-{gap: } att Cuff[es], will needes thincke soe of it:

ffor: Bountye and Magnificence, it were Admyrable in hir, yf it were not extreame, But all extreames are ffaultes, and especiallye that of profusenes, against the virtue of Bountye; ffor the extreames of other Parities, doe not depryve Men of exerciseinge the virtue it selfe, As excesse in vallor. cannott make a Man a Coward, But, excesse in Bountye, maye one daye, make them; both:

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both misserable, and meane:

Shee, is naturallye, very Constant, Both to hirwayes, and to her ffrindes, But, this must alsoe bee understoode, of hir, w[i]th som[m]e discretion; ffor though shee bee Constant in the Maine, shee is not all= wayes soe open, in the By; But, shee will often laye a side both thinges, and person[n]s, ffor a while, uppon som[m]e inward imp[er]ceptible Reason[n], yf rather it bee not uppon meere honor, though yett shee will bee sure afterward, to restore them (of hir selfe to the same place agayne, w[hi]ch they held beffore) I saye, shee might perhapps doe it, out of honor, because perhapps, shee is indeed wrought uppon a little therein, by beinge wearye of doeinge still the same thinge; and by the extreame delight, shee takes in varietye; wherein, as every Bodye hath his parte; Soe, I thincke, noe bodye is greater then

hirs, though yett still as I ffinde, shee goes not soe astraye, but that she com[m]es hom[m]e agayne by hir selfe.

In: poynte of Civillitye, and Courtesie, shee is most perfect, and Rare, and there are not manye, whoe bee more iust in payeing their respect[es], to their Betters: then shee is gracious in vouchsaffecting them, to her inferiors, Noe, gentleman appeareth beefore hir, to whom shee ryses:

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Ryses not, though shee bee att meat, And yett many others of my good Ladyes, of the Lower House, sitt som[m]e tymes as still, when their ffrindes, com[m]e in to attend them, As Judges doe uppon the Bench when prysoners: are call'd beefore them att the Barre; But, in all thinges, shee of hir selfe, Complies perfectlye, w[i]th Civilitye, and, that arrives to bee a kinde of Witch crafte, when she hath a particuler meaninge to Obliege, Such is hir grace, and swavitye:

The, error: w[hi]ch shee is esteemed to Comitt agate: this virtue, also in som[m]e kinde, is that shee Censures people, to willinglye, and makes hir selfe to easelye merrye, att the simplicitie, and Rusticityes of som[m]e, wherein it is most Certayne, that shee maye verie instantly discharge hir selfe, uppon a naturall impuissan[n]ce wch shee hath to {Contynne } Laughter, when, shee is provoked, and surprised, by som[m]e odd kynd of Obiect:

In: frindships, shee is very generous, and Noble, and true, Alloweing over theis little variations in Temporarye, and Tryflinge thinges, whereof I spake beefore, Butt, yett this Article of ffrindshipp: must bee thus understood, least it be bee mistaken in hir, For as shee cannott bee more Obliged then:

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then by yor: desireinge any thinge of hir, w[hi]ch is in hir owne power to graunte, Soe, yf yow goe to hir in yor. demaund, shee will flye to yow, in hir graunte, and will instantly bee ashamed, that shee cann doe noe more, But, yett, yf yow imploye hir, to use hir power for yow, to obtayne any thing[es] of any Bodye, shee hanges the winge, and cann, neyther fflye, nor goe, and goe, and shee makes hir selfe thereby the more unnecessarye, to hir Servant[es].

I: knowe, a Man, whoe hath presumed, to aske hir whie, shee would bee noe more fforward, w[i]th som[m]e greate p[er]son, over whom[m]e shee had once all power, ffor som[m]e Servant[es] of hir owne, whoe would gladlye, haue Comitted themselves to hir Protection: To, whom[m]e shee made this Aunswere, That shee held it a woefull and wretched thinge, to desire any ffavour, or service, of any person[n] whoe might, perhapps Repent, the doeing of it, beefore hee dyed, This, lookes lyke a playne sayeing, But, Reallye it is ffull, Both of wisdom[m]e, and greatnes, And the more seriouslye a Man thinckes of it, the more perfectlye hee will approve, and even Admyre it, And, ffor my owne parte, I ffinde it nowe soe verie true; As that the memorye of unkindnes, w[hi]ch was ever putt uppon mee, was not soe greivous, as it hath been of the greatest ffavours, and Trust[es], that ever I recyved

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I receyved, Because, I cam[m]e to knowe, afterward, that they were repented:

This Ladye, is held by som[m]e, to bee disdainfullye highe of Harte, and wthall, to bee severe, and sharpe in hir Censures, Concerninge this latter: poynte: I hould hir to bee

ffaultye; yf thinges must be weighed, after the Com[m]on waye; though Reallye there is att that tyme, noe malignitye att all in hir mynde; But, onely a meere Libertye, to speake hir thought[es] ffreelye, beffore such, as shee houldes not to bee unfitt, accordinge to the Meritt, both of the Obiect, and of the occasc[i]on, and to shewe, that there is noe partiallitye in hir, (fforasmuch, as Concerneth the Judginge partes) It is most Certayne; that noe straunger, noe nor an enemye is disobleiged more by hir therein, then eyther hir Dearest, or nearest ffrindes.

~~Butt, hir opinyon, and Judgmte~~ Hir: Affections, and Acc[i]ons, shalbee very different, Betweene ffrindes, and others, But hir opinyon, and Judgmte: shall not depend uppon the person[n]s, but uppon the thing[es], And soe it ought to bee, amongst all worthie and wyse People, ffor the Tribunalls of Affections, and Judgmt[es] : are, and ought to bee distincte, And the error of this noble Creature Consist[es], in not beinge

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A: Character Of the most excellent Lord, The Earle of Northumberland:

Hee, is naturallye, a kynde of Inward, and reserved Man, and hee doth not easelye make the world such playe, As to open him selfe, without much Observac[i]ons of their Judgmt[es]: though since his Condi[i]on hath produced, and Planted him, in the waye of the world, hee is ffounde to bee [RM: x] noe such Witch Eyther this Man, is very worthie, or such, as knowe him best, are deceyved most; ffor they whoie haue beheld him w[i]th more Curiositye; and Care, then w[i]th partiallitye, and purpose to gyve Applause, haue ffounde much in him, to prayse, and not soe much, as a little to reprove;

This: is soe true; that a Man, whom[m]e I Love, as my selfe; is wonte to saye of this Person[n], that hee hath but one quarrell to him, w[hi]ch is, that hee cann ffinde noethinge in him, to fforgive. But, yett, I knowe not whether I am[m]e ffullye of that mynde, or noe, ffor I Confesse, I haue layde upp: a kynde of Quere, Concerninge him, w[hi]ch I keepe wholie to my selfe, and meane to watche the successe, And yf hee Complye not wth:

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wth it, As I thincke hee should (though I meane to leave the Circumstau[n]ces of tyme, and place to him selfe, it will lessen him much, in som[m]e respect[es], wth mee.

I: hould the ffacultye of his mynde, to bee verye Reallye good, and incomparablye better, then they seeme, in such eyes, As marcke him not verye well. His Speeche is slowe, and it deserves a Pardon[n] of Course, ffor many Reason[n]s: ffor hee never speakes by Chaunce, never uppon varietye, never, but w[i]th exact Truthe; and never mee thinck[es], but w[i]th greate Reason[n], And soe as to shewe, that hee is a verye Temperate, and prudent Man, And indeed, hee never seemes, soe much, as to open his Mouth, towards speech, tyll hee haue ffirst asked Leave, and Councell, of his hart; His Apprehension[n] is verye readye; and his Judgmte certainlye sound, And all his Acc[i]ons, are such, As not to ffeare a Censure; not to desire a Corner But to bidd Men looke on, and doe their worst:

Behoulde, him, both att home, and Abroade and hee cann Love, and deffye yow, both att once; ffor yow: shalbee fforced to esteeme him, and yow shall haue noe Cause, to Blame him: Hee is:

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Hee, is a good Husband, a Noble Maister, a sweete Companyon; and though possitivelye, I cann affyrme noethinge, yett, I never heard otherwyse, then that hee was a most generous, and ffaithffull frinde.

When: wee see him in Corte: his Person[n], and his Age, gyve him verye good leave, to seeme as greate a Man, as hee is, and yett wthall, hee is soe Civill, modest, and quyett, as yf, hee were butt Tennant by Courtesye, to the verye Claother hee weares:

I: haue heard him suspected, and Taxed heeretoffore, As yf his hart, had been declyninge towards the Narrowe; And, I ffeare not, to Confesse; before this Paper; that I once Rebelled not against the Rumor: But, tyme, hath playde his parte, in this Acte; as it daylie doth, a thowsand other thing[es], wch is, to breake the Legg of Lyes, and to gyve winges to Truthe; ffor nowe wee haue seene, and knowne, that in his more private ffortune hee spentnotoriouslye beyound his meanes; and since it grewe more publike, hee hath Read soe lowde a Lesson[n] of wyse greatnes in his wayes (verye {Aunswereable} to his highe Birth) as hath serv'd to Reverse all erronious Concept of that kynde) and to shewe us such an example, as I haue neyther seene him Imitate ; nor

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nor ffinde him yett to bee Imitated in:

For: as much, as Concernes the Civill, and Constant, Noble waye of lyfe; both in his Howses abroad, and in the Capitall Cittye of the standinge Corte: where hee is att hom[m]e , whether wee Consider his Coaches, his Horses, his Trayne, his Liveryes, or his Table; w[hi]ch p[er]happes, it (to speake modestlye) one of the best, w[hi]ch ffor a doozin guest[es], was ever kept in this Kingdom[m]e , wherein, I meane not onelye the dyett of fflesh, and ffishe; wch Aunsweres to the stufte of our Clothes, But, I Consider alsoe, the Bread, Wyne, Sallett[es], Oyle, vyneger, ffruite, Sweetmeat[es], Lynnen, Peate, and Light[es], wch, att the Table I accompt, As the pettye Toyes of ovr Attyre; And indeed it is such in all respect[es], as serveth to lett us see, whatt kynde of Person hee is, especiallye yf wee take in the manner of this Attendaunce of his Servant[es], whoe looke, as yf they were happie, when they are Busye, And lyve w[i]th that Intenc[i]on and Reverence, in their Maisters sight, As yf they were about som[m]e greate Affayer; wch still Addes to his Lustre:

And: wthall, yf wee dwell uppon the Considerac[i]on of his owne person[n], there the Truth of this will best:

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best appeare, ffor, hee is both soe noble, and soe humble, that Obleiges, and Conffoundes, and lookes fforth soe probablye, and effectuallye uppon yow, in the waye of gyveinge yow all satisfacc[i]on by Civilitye, That yow will sweare yor: welcom[m]e (though hee, (whoe was onely Able to make it true) never spake worde of it, In the meane tyme, it is noe ffigure, nor ffLOURISHE, but a Reall truth, that hee Beares himselfe soe, As to seeme not the Man, whoe gyves, but receyves, all the honnor: of the meetinge:

His: societye, is easye, and Agreeable att all tymes, his Moralist[es], but ffor virtue, and Conversac[i]on greate; and hee is never to bee heard lowde, or seene in disorder, nor once to sweare an Oath, howe greate soever the occasion[n], waye eyther seeme, or bee; And therefore, wee owe him not onely our affecc[i]on: But our Admiration, tyll eyther^{others} by groweinge lyke him, procure to saue us that Labor: or els att least to lesson, or devide our

pleasure; by makeinge us Comun[n]icate, this pulse of Hart alsoe, to them; wch nowe Beates,
both soe iustlye, and p[er]ticularlye uppon him:

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Other manuscript witnesses

- British Library, Hargrave MS 226, ff. 236r–243r
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.303, pp304–312

Seventeenth-century print exemplars

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Modern print exemplars

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<https://mpese.ac.uk/t/CharacterLadyCarlisleEarlNorthumberland.html>