

Letter to the Earl of Essex (19 April 1639)

John Kennedy, 6th Earl of Cassilis, John Wemyss, 1st Earl of Wemyss, Archibald Campbell, 1st Marquess of Argyll, John Lindsay, 1st Earl of Lindsay, John Sinclair, 9th Lord Sinclair, William Ramsay, 1st Earl of Dalhousie, Aynsey, David Wemyss, Lord Elcho (2nd Earl of Wemyss), William Crichton?, 1st Earl of Dumfries and Viscount Ayr, John Leslie, 6th Earl of Rothes, James Graham, 5th Earl of Montrose, John Elphinstone, 2nd Lord Balmerino, Lord George Forester, William Kerr, 3rd Earl of Lothian and Barghley

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 11045, ff. 18r–18v

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Lett[er] from E R

In my last, I mentioned a letter, which the Covenanters sent to my lord of Essex to Barwicke, which beares date the 19.th of Aprill 1639. some saye, there were twoe letters sent, one seald, and the other vnseald, which unseald,^{Letter} the messinger told my lord of Essex was the true copy of the seald letter, which the Covenanters presumd his lo[rdshi]pe would send to his Ma[jes]tie before hee broake it open: others saye, after the kinge had reade this letter, hee forth with sent it backe to lord of Essex, both these reports are true, It is a well pend letter, and a cuning one, I shall saye noe more of it, but sett it downe as followeth:

Our most noble Lord:

As in all these greate affaires (which haue bine soe much noysed a broade of the liberties of our Church, and state, our cheifest care hath bine to walke warrantably according to the lawes, that were still in force for that effect: soe wee are certainly perswaded, that a mongst our selves there are none that can iustly complaine of what hath passed, And for those our Countrie men, whoe are nowe in England, if they bee of that nomber, as they are evill subiects to our gracious soveraigne, and worse compatriotts to vs, soe of all, they are the worse guests a mongst you, while they indeavour to make the remedy of their evils, and the escape of their deserved punishments, the begining of an incurable disease betwixt the twoe nations to whome this quarrell should in noe waye extend. If the informations, and protestations made by vs for this end, and the bond of our Covenant swoarne to God, and man, haue not cleered all scruples in the minde of our gracious kinge hitherto, and of all good subiects with you, that there are too many a mongst you, alsoe, in greatest place, and credit, whose private bias runs quite wyde, and contrary to the publique good; and whoe are those wicked ones, riseing earely to poyson the publique fountaine and to sowe the tares of vnhappy Iealosies, and discords betweene you, and vs, before the good seede of our love, and respect to our neighbour nation can take place in your hart; A mongst all the evils of this kind, which dayly over take us, next to the present undeserved displeasure of our Prince a mongst vs, (which God in his mercy to both) will take off vs) in his owne tyme, there could nothing befallen soe strainge, and vnexpected to vs, as the draweing of your forces together vpon your border, which whether to defend your selves, or to annoy vs, and soe to prepare; and gather those cloudes which threaten a sore tempest to both, wee for our part wish they maye first perish in the shipp wracke, whoe begin first to dash the one nation against the other: As for you, my lord, although your place, person, and quallity, the honour,

and reputation of your former life will give vs ^{some} assurances that your lo[rdshi]pe will bee {warie} to begin the quarrell, whereat, onely enimies to both the nations will reioyce, and catch the advantage: yet, give vs leave to admire these groundles feares that makes you thus strengthen the boorders, and rather suspect these pregnant presumptions of a further proiect intended against this nation by your power, which needes must make vs bestirr our selves betimes at all hands for our safety: God is our wittnesse, wee desire noe nationall quarrell to rise betwixt vs, or tast of that bitter fruite which maye sett both ours, and your childrens teeth vpon edge, but rather hold our selves obliged in conscience of our duety to God, our Prince, and all your nation, our bretheren, to trie all iust, and lawfull meanes for the removall of all {gap: illegible} causes of differences betwixt twoe nations, whoe are

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yet linked together, and should bee still in all the strongest bonds of affection, and common Interest, and to bee alwayes ready to offer the occasion of greater satisfaction in this kind of cleareing our loyall intentions towards our Prince, to all whome it maye concerne, and namely to your lo[rdshi]pe, in regard of your place, and commaund at this tyme by any meanes whatsoever should bee thought good to represent vnto your lo[rdshi]pe being occasionally together soe fewe of vs, as are in this place, for our selves, and in name of the rest of our number, whoe together with vs will expect your lo[rdshi]ps answeare and rest:

Your lo[rdshi]ps affectionate freinds to serve you.

Cassells, Weymyst, Argyle, Linsey, Sinclair, Duthouse Aynsey, Elcho, Eyeir, Rothesse, Montrosse Balmerino, Forrester, Lothian, Barghley, Edenburge 19th of Aprill 1639

I heare my lord Generall, takes it not well (as hee hath good cause) why this letter was not rather directed to him, then my lord of Essex, whoe is but Leivetenant generall of the armye, but, the anns-weare, is, that my lord of Essex was all this while at Barwicke, where my lord Generall was not: some men doe believe, this letter tends to a desire in the Covenanters to an accommodation, which peradventure maye fall out, if soe bee those lords of the Session (whoe are comeing from out of Scotland to his Ma[jes]tie) can soe farr prevaile with the Covenanters as to send to his Ma[jes]tie by them (whoe are moderate men and haue not subscribd the Covenant) some such humble petition, as his Ma[jes]tie maye in honour condescend unto:

Other manuscript witnesses

- All Souls College, MS 181, ff. 148r–v
- British Library, Harley MS 6801, ff. 11r–12v
- British Library, Sloane MS 650, ff. 93r–v
- Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 800, ff. 52r–55v
- Bodleian Library, MS Carte 130, ff. 52r–53
- Durham University Library, MSP 9, reversing the volume, 124–125
- Huntington Library, EL 7735
- Huntington Library, EL 7736
- Huntington Library, Hastings Correspondence Box 15, HA 1193
- Kent Archives, U269/1/Oo127
- Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, 9/34/45

