

Letter to Richard Weston, Earl of Portland (1633?)

Sir Henry Wotton

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 22591, ff. 80r–80v

80r

Sir henrye wotton's letter to [th]e Lo[rd] Treasurer weston

My most honored Lord I most humblye pr[e]sent (thoughe by some Infirmityes A little to late) A Strange new yeares guifte/ vnto yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]pp/ w[hi]ch I will pr[e]sume to Tearme the cheapest of all that ^{you} haue rec[eived]/ and yett of the richest materialls, In shorte it is onlye an Image of yo[u]r selfe drawne by memorye fro[m] such discourse as I haue take vpp heere and there of yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]pp amonge the most intelligent and vnmaligna[n]t men, w[hi]ch to purtract before you I thought noe servile Office / but Ingenious and reall. and I could wish that it had come at the daye/ soe [tha]t yo[u]r Lo[r]d[shi]pp might haue begunn the newe yeare somew[ha]t like Plato's difinition of felicitie w[i]th the Contemplac[i]on of yo[u]r owne Idea

They saye that in yo[u]r forraigne Employ[m]en[tes] vnd[er] K[ing] Iames yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]pp wan the opynion of A verye able and searchinge Iudgment havinge bene the first discoveror of the Intentions against the Palatinate w[hi]ch were then in brewing & masked w[i]th much Art. And [tha]t S[i>r] Edward Conwayne gott the Start of you both in Title and employment at home because the late duke of Buck[ingham] wa[n]ted then for his owne Ends A Martiall Secretary

They saye that vnd[er] o[u]r pr[e]sent Sou[er]aigne/ you were chose[n] to [th]e highest charge at the lowest of the State/ when some Instrument was requisite of indubitable Integritie/ and p[ro]vident Moderat[i]on/ w[hi]ch Attributes I haue heard none denye you

The

80v

The discourse thus of yo[u]r Acc[i]ons since. That thoughe greate exhaustions cannot be cured w[i]th suddaine remedies/ noe more in A Kingedome then in an naturall Bodye . yet yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]p hath well allayed those blustering Clamors wherew[i]th at the begin[n]ing yo[u]r house was in a manner daylye besieged/

They note [tha]t there haue bene manye Changes/ but [tha]t none hath brought ^{to} the Place A Iudgm[en]t soe Coultiuated and illuminated w[i]th various Erudition as yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]p since the Lord Burghly vnder Queene Elizabeth who[m] they make yo[u]r Parable in the ornament of knowledge / They observed in yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]p divers remarkable Combinatons of Vertues & abilityes rarely sociable

In the Character of yo[u]r aspecte A mixture of authoritie & modestie In the fa[cc]ulties of yo[u]r mynde / quicke appr[e]hension and soliditie together In the Stile of yo[u]r Porte and Trayne as much dignitie and as great dependency as was ever in any of yo[u]r place / & w[i]th litle noyse or outward fume /

That yo[u]r Table is verye abundant, Free and noble w[i]thout Luxurie That you are by nature noe flatterer, & yett of greatest power in Cou[r]t That you haue Magnificence/ and Frugalitye bothe togither That you entertayne yo[u]r Guests and visitors w[i]th Noble curtesie/ but voyde of Complem[en]t. Lastlye that you maynetayne A due regard of yo[u]r Person and place, & yett are an Enemye to Froathie formalitye /

Now in the discharge of yo[u]r function/ They speake of twoe things, that haue done you much honor namely That you haue had allwayes a speciall care to the supplye of the Navye/ And likewise A more worthy and tender respect towards the Kings onelye Sister, for her continuall support from hence then shee hath founde before

They observe yo[u]r greatnes as firmlye established as eu[er] was any in the Loue (and w[hi]ch is more) in the Estimac[i]on of A Kinge / whoe hath soe signalizd his owne Constancye/ Besydes yo[u]r Addic[i]on of Strength (or at least of lustre) by the Noblest Alliances of the Land /

Amongst these Notes it is noe wonder if some obserue [tha]t betweene A good willingness in yo[u]r Affections to satisfye all/ And an impossibility in the matter, and yet an ymportunitye in the p[er]sons/ there doth now and then I knowe not howe/ arise A little Impatience/ w[hi]ch must needs fall vpon yo[u]r Lordshipp vnlesse you had bene cutt out of A Rocke of diamo[n]ds especiallye hauinge bene before soe Conu[er]sant w[i]th liberall Studies, & w[i]th the freedome of yo[u]r owne Mynde

Now after this shorte collection touching yo[u]r most honoured p[er]son I beseech you give mee leave to add likewise a litle what men saye of the Writter. They saye I want not yo[u]r gracious good will towards mee according to the degree of my poore talent and Travells/ but they saye I am wanting to my selfe. And in good faith (my Lord) in saying soe they saye truelye. For I am condemned I knowe not how by nature to A kinde of vnfortunate Bashfullnes in my owne busines/ and it is nowe to late to put mee into A newe Furnice Therefore it must be yo[u]r Lo[ordshi]ps prop[er] worke/ and not onelye yo[u]r Noble but even yo[u]r Charitable goodnes that must in some blessed houre remember mee /

God giue your Lo[rdshi]pp manye healthfull Ioyfull yeares and the blessinge of that Text *Beatus qui attendit ad attenuatu[m]* And Soe I remayne w[i]th An humble and willinge hearte

At all your Lo[rdshi]pps Comaunds

Henrye Wotton

Other manuscript witnesses

- Bodleian Library, MS Willis 58, ff. 456r–460v
- Cambridge University Library, Additional MS 9276, item 7, ff4
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS X.d.244, ff. 1r–4r
- Gonville & Caius College, MS 73/40, ff. 302r–303v