

SUMMARY: The document below is a draft letter in the hand of a secretary of Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, said to be endorsed:

1605 [=1606], 14 February, to the Earl of Derby

The endorsement must be partly in error since the letter instructs the intended recipient to ‘expect when my Lord of Derby shall send unto you’, and was therefore not written to the Earl of Derby.

The circumstances underlying the letter were that William Stanley (1561 – 29 September 1642), 6th Earl of Derby, had requested that both King James and Cecil stand godfather to his son and heir, and that the King would condescend to allow the child to bear the name ‘James’. The letter below indicates that the King had agreed to both requests. Although there is nothing in the letter which clearly identifies the ‘Lord’ to whom it is addressed, it seems possible that Robert Cecil’s half brother, Thomas Cecil, created 1st Earl of Exeter on 4 May 1605, was the intended recipient, and that Robert Cecil’s remark that he had been ‘partly guilty of the election’ indicates that it was at his prompting that the King had chosen Thomas Cecil to act as his proxy at the christening of the Earl of Derby’s son and heir. See also CP 110/4, CP 113-161 and CP 190/41.

According to the *ODNB*, James Stanley (31 January 1607 – 15 October 1561) was the eldest son of William Stanley and Elizabeth de Vere. However if James Stanley, 7th Earl of Derby, was not born until 31 January 1607, the date of the endorsement on the letter below, said to be 14 February 1605 [=1606], indicates that he was not the eldest-born son, but rather the eldest surviving son of the 6th Earl of Derby and Elizabeth de Vere.

My very good Lord, although this letter from his Majesty which I do send you enclosed need no other circumstance than the delivery, yet because I must confess myself partly guilty of the election, I cannot forbear to acknowledge that your Lordship shall have that petty surplusage of my particular obligation over and above his Majesty’s gracious acceptation in this case. Therefore, my Lord it now remaineth only for your Lordship to expect when my Lord of Derby shall send unto you without putting yourself to any other trouble, for having advertised him of his Majesty’s choice I have likewise written unto him that he shall give your Lordship convenient warning, and for all things that are to be done in respect of his Majesty’s service you shall find one of his Majesty’s gentlemen ushers at Knowsley, and wardrobers to attend you there and inform you concerning the ceremonies.

And thus, my Lord, having no more to tell you than that his Majesty’s pleasure is you shall honour the young Lord with his own name, I commit you to God.

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