

HENRY STUART

James Stuart (1688–1766), the Old Pretender
to Charles Stuart (1720–1788), the Young Pretender

Albano, 13 June 1747

I know not whether you will be surprised, my dearest Carluccio, when I tell you that your brother will be made a cardinal the first day of next month. Naturally speaking, you should have been consulted about a resolution of that kind before it had been executed; but as the Duke and I were unalterably determined on the matter, and we foresaw that you might probably not approve of it, we thought it would be showing you more regard, and that it would even be more agreeable to you, that the thing should be done before your answer could come here and to have it in your power to say it was done without your knowledge and approbation.

It is very true, I did not expect to see the Duke here so soon, and that his tenderness and affection for me prompted him to undertake that journey. But after I had seen him, I soon found that his chief motive for it was to discourse with me fully and freely on the vocation he had long had to embrace an ecclesiastical state, and which he had so long concealed from me and kept to himself, with a view, no doubt, of having it in his power of being of some use to you in the late conjunctures.

But the case is now altered. And, as I am fully convinced of the sincerity and solidity of his vocation, I should think it a resisting the will of God and acting directly against my conscience if I should pretend to constrain him in a matter which so nearly concerns him.

The maxims I have bred you up in and have always followed of not constraining others in matters of religion did not a little help to determine me on the present occasion, since it would be a monstrous proposition that a king should be a father to his people and a tyrant to his children. After this, I will not conceal from you, my dearest Carluccio, that motives of conscience and equity have not alone determined me in this particular; and that, when I seriously consider all that has passed in relation to the Duke for some years bygone, had he not had the vocation he has, I should have used my best endeavours and all arguments to have induced him to embrace that state.

If Providence has made you the elder brother, he is as much my son as you, and my paternal care and affection are equally to be extended to you and him; so that I should have thought I had greatly failed in both towards him had I not endeavoured by all means to secure to him, as much as in me lay, that tranquility and happiness which I was sensible it was impossible for him to enjoy in any other state.

You will understand all that I mean, without my enlarging farther on this last so disagreeable article. And you cannot, I am sure, complain that I deprive you of any service the Duke might have been to you, since you must be sensible that, all things considered, he would have been useless to you remaining in the world.

But let us look forward and not backward. The resolution is taken, and will be executed before your answer to this can come here. If you think proper to say you were ignorant of it and do not approve it, I shall not take it amiss of you. But, for God's sake, let not a step which naturally should secure peace and union to us for the rest of our days become a subject of scandal and eclat, which would fall heavier upon you than upon us in our present situation, and which a filial and brotherly conduct in you will easily prevent.

Your silence towards your brother and what you wrote to me about him since he left Paris would do you little honour if they were known, and are mortifications your brother did not deserve, but which cannot alter his sentiments towards you. He now writes to you a few lines himself, but I forbid him entering into any particulars, since it would be giving himself and you a useless trouble after all I have said about him here.

You must be sensible that on many occasions I have had reason to complain of you, and that I have acted for this long while towards you more like a son than a father; but I can assure you, my dear child, nothing of all that sticks with me, and I forgive you the more sincerely and cordially all the trouble you have given me, that I am persuaded it was not your intention to fail towards me, and that I shall have reason to be pleased with you for the time to come, since all I request of you hereafter is your personal love and affection for me and your brother.

Those who may have had their own views in endeavouring to remove us from your affairs have compassed their end. We are satisfied, and you remain master, so that I see no bone of contention remaining, nor any possible obstacle to a perfect peace and union amongst us for the future. God bless my dearest Carluccio, whom I tenderly embrace.

Alexander Charles Ewald, *The Life and Times of Prince Charles Stuart* (London: Chatto, 1883):319–321.