

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Belle Boyd Hardinge to Abraham Lincoln<sup>1</sup>, January 24, 1865

---

1 Belle Boyd (1843-1900) was a young woman from Martinsburg, Virginia who worked as a spy for the rebels. After being arrested, imprisoned and released by Union authorities on two occasions, she was sent to Great Britain in May 1864 as a bearer of Confederate dispatches. While en route to Britain, Boyd's ship was captured by the Union blockading fleet. Boyd fell in love with a Union naval officer named Hardinge and was banished to Canada. From Canada, Boyd made her way to Britain. Hardinge and Boyd were reunited in Britain and married on August 25, 1864. After her husband's death in 1866, she became an actress and gave lectures on her career as a spy. She remarried on two more occasions and died in Wisconsin on June 11, 1900 while on the lecture circuit.

Brunswick Hotel. Jermyn St. London

24th Jany. 1865.

I have heard from good authority that if I suppress the Book I have now ready for publication, you may be induced to consider leniently the case of my husband, S. Wylde Hardinge, now a prisoner in Fort Delaware,<sup>2</sup> I think it would be well for you & me to come to some definite understanding— My Book was not originally intended to be more than a personal narrative, but since my husband's unjust arrest I had intended making it political, & had introduced many atrocious circumstances respecting your Government with which I am so well acquainted & which would open the eyes of Europe to many things of which the world on this side of the water little dreams— If you will release my husband & set him free, so that he may join me here in England by the beginning of March — I pledge you my word that my Book shall be suppressed— Should my husband not be with me by the 25th of March I shall at once place my Books in the hands of a publisher.<sup>3</sup>

---

2 Hardinge had been arrested by military authorities when he returned to the United States in December 1864.

---

3 Lincoln did not respond to this offer. Hardinge was released from Fort Delaware in February and Belle Boyd's book, entitled *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, was published in London by Saunders, Otley and Company in 1865.

Trusting an immediate reply,



I am Sir, Yr. obdt. Sevt.

Belle Boyd Hardinge