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Love Letters of Henry Eighth to Anne Boleyn

The Love Letters of Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn

With Notes

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Love Letters of Henry Eighth to Anne Boleyn

Letter First To Anne Boleyn

On turning over in my mind the contents of your last letters, I have put myself into great agony, not knowing how to interpret them, whether to my disadvantage, as you show in some places, or to my advantage, as I understand them in some others, beseeching you earnestly to let me know expressly your whole mind as to the love between us two. It is absolutely necessary for me to obtain this answer, having been for above a whole year stricken with the dart of love, and not yet sure whether I shall fail of finding a place in your heart and affection, which last point has prevented me for some time past from calling you my mistress; because, if you only love me with an ordinary love, that name is not suitable for you, because it denotes a singular love, which is far from common. But if you please to do the office of a true loyal mistress and friend, and to give up yourself body and heart to me, who will be, and have been, your most loyal servant, (if your rigour does not forbid me) I promise you that not only the name shall be given you, but also that I will take you for my only mistress, casting off all others besides you out of my thoughts and affections, and serve you only. I beseech you to give an entire answer to this my rude letter, that I may know on what and how far I may depend. And

if it does not please you to answer me in writing, appoint some place where I may have it by word of mouth, and I will go thither with all my heart. No more, for fear of tiring you. Written by the hand of him who would willingly remain yours,

H. R.

Letter Second To Anne Boleyn

Though it is not fitting for a gentleman to take his lady in the place of a servant, yet, complying with your desire, I willingly grant it you, if thereby you can find yourself less uncomfortable in the place chosen by yourself, than you have been in that which I gave you, thanking you cordially that you are pleased still to have some remembrance of me. 6. n. A. 1 de A. o. na. v. e. z.

HENRY R.

Letter Third To Anne Boleyn

Although, my Mistress, it has not pleased you to remember the promise you made me when I was last with you--that is, to hear good news from you, and to have an answer to my last letter; yet it seems to me that it belongs to a true servant (seeing that otherwise he can know nothing) to inquire the health of his mistress, and to acquit myself of the duty of a true servant, I send you this letter, beseeching you to apprise me of your welfare, which I pray to God may continue as long as I desire mine own. And to cause you yet oftener to remember me, I send you, by the bearer of this, a buck killed late last night by my own hand, hoping that when you eat of it you may think of the hunter; and thus, for want of room, I must end my letter, written by the hand of your servant, who very often wishes for you instead of your brother.

H. R.

Letter Fourth To Anne Boleyn

MY MISTRESS & FRIEND, my heart and I surrender ourselves into your hands, beseeching you to hold us commended to your favour, and that by absence your affection to us may not be lessened: for it were a great pity to increase our pain, of which absence produces enough and more than I could ever have thought could be felt, reminding us of a point in

astronomy which is this: the longer the days are, the more distant is the sun, and nevertheless the hotter; so is it with our love, for by absence we are kept a distance from one another, and yet it retains its fervour, at least on my side; I hope the like on yours, assuring you that on my part the pain of absence is already too great for me; and when I think of the increase of that which I am forced to suffer, it would be almost intolerable, but for the firm hope I have of your unchangeable affection for me: and to remind you of this sometimes, and seeing that I cannot be personally present with you, I now send you the nearest thing I can to that, namely, my picture set in a bracelet, with the whole of the device, which you already know, wishing myself in their place, if it should please you. This is from the hand of your loyal servant and friend,

H. R.

Letter Fifth To Anne Boleyn

For a present so beautiful that nothing could be more so (considering the whole of it), I thank you most cordially, not only on account of the fine diamond and the ship in which the solitary damsel is tossed about, but chiefly for the fine interpretation and the too humble submission which your goodness hath used towards me in this case; for I think it would be very difficult for me to find an occasion to deserve it, if I were not assisted by your great humanity and favour, which I have always sought to seek, and will seek to preserve by all the kindness in my power, in which my hope has placed its unchangeable intention, which says, *Aut illic, aut nullibi*.

The demonstrations of your affection are such, the beautiful mottoes of the letter so cordially expressed, that they oblige me for ever to honour, love, and serve you sincerely, beseeching you to continue in the same firm and constant purpose, assuring you that, on my part, I will surpass it rather than make it reciprocal, if loyalty of heart and a desire to please you can accomplish this.

I beg, also, if at any time before this I have in any way offended you, that you would give me the same absolution that you ask, assuring you, that henceforward my heart shall be dedicated to you alone. I wish my person was so too. God can do it, if He pleases, to whom I pray every day for that end, hoping that at length my prayers will be heard. I wish the time may be short, but I shall think it long till we see one another.

Written by the hand of that secretary, who in heart, body, and will, is,

Your loyal and most assured Servant,

H. sultre A.B. ne cherse R.

Letter Sixth To Anne Boleyn

TO MY MISTRESS. Because the time seems very long since I heard concerning your health and you, the great affection I have for you has induced me to send you this bearer, to be better informed of your health and pleasure, and because, since my parting from you, I have been told that the opinion in which I left you is totally changed, and that you would not come to court either with your mother, if you could, or in any other manner; which report, if true, I cannot sufficiently marvel at, because I am sure that I have since never done any thing to offend you, and it seems a very poor return for the great love which I bear you to keep me at a distance both from the speech and the person of the woman that I esteem most in the world: and if you love me with as much affection as I hope you do, I am sure that the distance of our two persons would be a little irksome to you, though this does not belong so much to the mistress as to the servant.

Consider well, my mistress, that absence from you grieves me sorely, hoping that it is not your will that it should be so; but if I knew for certain that you voluntarily desired it, I could do no other than mourn my ill-fortune, and by degrees abate my great folly. And so, for lack of time, I make an end of this rude letter, beseeching you to give credence to this bearer in all that he will tell you from me.

Written by the hand of your entire Servant,

H. R.

Letter Seventh To Anne Boleyn

DARLING, these shall be only to advertise you that this bearer and his fellow be despatched with as many things to compass our matter, and to bring it to pass as our wits could imagine or devise; which brought to pass, as I trust, by their diligence, it shall be shortly, you and I shall have our desired end, which should be more to my heart's ease, and more quietness to my mind, than any other thing in the world; as, with God's grace, shortly I trust shall be proved, but not so soon as I would it were; yet I will ensure you that there shall be no time lost that may be won, and further can not be done; for *_ultra posse non est esse_*. Keep him not too long with you, but desire him, for your sake, to make the more speed; for the sooner we shall have word from him, the sooner shall our matter come to pass. And thus upon trust of your short repair to London, I make an end of my letter, my own sweet heart.

Written with the hand of him which desireth as much to be yours as you do to have him.

H. R.

Letter Eighth Anne Boleyn to Wolsey

MY LORD, in my most humblest wise that my heart can think, I desire you to pardon me that I am so bold to trouble you with my simple and rude writing, esteeming it to proceed from her that is much desirous to know that your grace does well, as I perceive by this bearer that you do, the which I pray God long to continue, as I am most bound to pray; for I do know the great pains and troubles that you have taken for me both day and night is never likely to be recompensed on my part, but alonely in loving you, next unto the king's grace, above all creatures living. And I do not doubt but the daily proofs of my deeds shall manifestly declare and affirm my writing to be true, and I do trust you do think the same.

My lord, I do assure you, I do long to hear from you news of the legate; for I do hope, as they come from you, they shall be very good; and I am sure you desire it as much as I, and more, an it were possible; as I know it is not: and thus remaining in a steadfast hope, I make an end of my letter.

Written with the hand of her that is most bound to be

Your humble Servant,

ANNE BOLEYN.

Postscript by Henry viii

The writer of this letter would not cease, till she had caused me likewise to set my hand, desiring you, though it be short, to take it in good part. I ensure you that there is neither of us but greatly desireth to see you, and are joyous to hear that you have escaped this plague so well, trusting the fury thereof to be passed, especially with them that keepeth good diet, as I trust you do. The not hearing of the legate's arrival in France causeth us somewhat to muse; notwithstanding, we trust, by your diligence and vigilancy (with the assistance of Almighty God), shortly to be eased out of that trouble. No more to you at this time, but that I pray God send you as good health and prosperity as the writer would.

By your loving Sovereign and Friend,

H. R.

Letter Ninth To Anne Boleyn

There came to me suddenly in the night the most afflicting news that could have arrived. The first, to hear of the sickness of my mistress, whom I esteem more than all the world, and whose health I desire as I do my own, so that I would gladly bear half your illness to make you well. The second, from the fear that I have of being still longer harassed by my enemy, Absence, much longer, who has hitherto given me all possible uneasiness, and as far as I can judge is determined to spite me more because I pray God to rid me of this troublesome tormentor. The third, because the physician in whom I have most confidence, is absent at the very time when he might do me the greatest pleasure; for I should hope, by him and his means, to obtain one of my chief joys on earth--that is the care of my mistress--yet for want of him I send you my second, and hope that he will soon make you well. I shall then love him more than ever. I beseech you to be guided by his advice in your illness. In so doing I hope soon to see you again, which will be to me a greater comfort than all the precious jewels in the world.

Written by that secretary, who is, and for ever will be, your loyal and most assured Servant,

H. (A B) R.

Letter Tenth To Anne Boleyn

The uneasiness my doubts about your health gave me, disturbed and alarmed me exceedingly, and I should not have had any quiet without hearing certain tidings. But now, since you have as yet felt nothing, I hope, and am assured that it will spare you, as I hope it is doing with us. For when we were at Walton, two ushers, two valets de chambres and your brother, master-treasurer, fell ill, but are now quite well; and since we have returned to our house at Hunsdon, we have been perfectly well, and have not, at present, one sick person, God be praised; and I think, if you would retire from Surrey, as we did, you would escape all danger. There is another thing that may comfort you, which is, that, in truth in this distemper few or no women have been taken ill, and what is more, no person of our court, and few elsewhere, have died of it. For which reason I beg you, my entirely beloved, not to frighten yourself nor be too uneasy at our absence; for wherever I am, I am yours, and yet we must sometimes submit to our misfortunes, for whoever will struggle against fate is generally but so much the farther from gaining his end: wherefore comfort yourself, and take courage and avoid the pestilence as much as you can, for I hope shortly to make you sing, *_la renvoyé_*. No more at present, from lack of time, but that I wish you in my arms, that I might a little dispel your unreasonable thoughts.

Written by the hand of him who is and alway will be yours,

Im- H. R. -mutable.

Letter Eleventh To Anne Boleyn

The cause of my writing at this time, good sweetheart, is only to understand of your good health and prosperity; whereof to know I would be as glad as in manner mine own, praying God that (an it be His pleasure) to send us shortly together, for I promise you I long for it. How be it, I trust it shall not be long to; and seeing my darling is absent, I can do no less than to send her some flesh, representing my name, which is hart flesh for Henry, prognosticating that hereafter, God willing, you may enjoy some of mine, which He pleased, I would were now.

As touching your sister's matter, I have caused Walter Welze to write to my lord my mind therein, whereby I trust that Eve shall not have power to deceive Adam; for surely, whatsoever is said, it cannot so stand with his honour but that he must needs take her, his natural daughter, now in her extreme necessity.

No more to you at this time, mine own darling, but that with a wish I would we were together an evening.

With the hand of yours,

H. R.

Letter Twelfth To Anne Boleyn

Since your last letters, mine own darling, Walter Welshe, Master Browne, Thos. Care, Grion of Brearton, and John Coke, the apothecary, be fallen of the sweat in this house, and, thanked be God, all well recovered, so that as yet the plague is not fully ceased here, but I trust shortly it shall. By the mercy of God, the rest of us yet be well, and I trust shall pass it, either not to have it, or, at the least, as easily as the rest have done.

As touching the matter of Wilton, my lord cardinal hath had the nuns before him, and examined them, Mr. Bell being present; which hath certified me that, for a truth, she had confessed herself (which we would have had abbess) to have had two children by two sundry priests; and, further, since hath been kept by a servant of the Lord Broke that was, and that not long ago. Wherefore I would not, for all the gold in the world, clog your conscience nor mine to make her ruler of a house which is of so ungodly demeanour; nor, I trust, you would not that neither for brother nor sister, I should so destain mine honour or conscience. And, as touching the prioress, or Dame Eleanor's eldest sister, though there is

not any evident case proved against them, and that the prioress is so old that for many years she could not be as she was named; yet notwithstanding, to do you pleasure, I have done that neither of them shall have it, but that some other good and well-disposed woman shall have it, whereby the house shall be the better reformed (whereof I ensure you it had much need), and God much the better served.

As touching your abode at Hever, do therein as best shall like you, for you best know what air doth best with you; but I would it were come thereto (if it pleased God), that neither of us need care for that, for I ensure you I think it long. Suche is fallen sick of the sweat, and therefore I send you this bearer, because I think you long to hear tidings from us, as we do likewise from you.

Written with the hand _de votre seul_,

H. R.

Letter Thirteenth To Anne Boleyn

The approach of the time for which I have so long waited rejoices me so much, that it seems almost to have come already. However, the entire accomplishment cannot be till the two persons meet, which meeting is more desired by me than anything in this world; for what joy can be greater upon earth than to have the company of her who is dearest to me, knowing likewise that she does the same on her part, the thought of which gives me the greatest pleasure.

Judge what an effect the presence of that person must have on me, whose absence has grieved my heart more than either words or writing can express, and which nothing can cure, but that begging you, my mistress, to tell your father from me, that I desire him to hasten the time appointed by two days, that he may be at court before the old term, or, at farthest, on the day prefixed; for otherwise I shall think he will not do the lover's turn, as he said he would, nor answer my expectation.

No more at present for lack of time, hoping shortly that by word of mouth I shall tell you the rest of the sufferings endured by me from your absence.

Written by the hand of the secretary, who wishes himself at this moment privately with you, and who is, and always will be,

Your loyal and most assured Servant,

H. no other A B seek R.

Letter Fourteenth To Anne Boleyn

DARLING, I heartily recommend me to you, ascertaining you that I am not a little perplexed with such things as your brother shall on my part declare unto you, to whom I pray you give full credence, for it were too long to write. In my last letters I writ to you that I trusted shortly to see you, which is better known at London than with any that is about me, whereof I not a little marvel; but lack of discreet handling must needs be the cause thereof. No more to you at this time, but that I trust shortly our meetings shall not depend upon other men's light handlings, but upon our own.

Written with the hand of him that longeth to be yours.

H. R.

Letter Fifteenth To Anne Boleyn

MINE own SWEETHEART, this shall be to advertise you of the great elengeness that I find here since your departing; for, I ensure you methinketh the time longer since your departing now last, than I was wont to do a whole fortnight. I think your kindness and my fervency of love causeth it; for, otherwise, I would not have thought it possible that for so little a while it should have grieved me. But now that I am coming towards you, methinketh my pains be half removed; and also I am right well comforted in so much that my book maketh substantially for my matter; in looking whereof I have spent above four hours this day, which causeth me now to write the shorter letter to you at this time, because of some pain in my head; wishing myself (especially an evening) in my sweetheart's arms, whose pretty dukkys I trust shortly to kiss.

Written by the hand of him that was, is, and shall be yours by his own will,

H. R.

Letter Sixteenth To Anne Boleyn

DARLING, Though I have scant leisure, yet, remembering my promise, I thought it convenient to certify you briefly in what case our affairs stand. As touching a lodging for you, we have got one by my lord cardinal's means, the like whereof could not have been found hereabouts for all causes, as this bearer shall more show you. As touching our other affairs, I assure you there can be no more done, nor more diligence used, nor all manner of dangers better both foreseen and provided for, so that

I trust it shall be hereafter to both our comforts, the specialities whereof were both too long to be written, and hardly by messenger to be declared. Wherefore, till you repair hither, I keep something in store, trusting it shall not be long to; for I have caused my lord, your father, to make his provisions with speed; and thus for lack of time, darling, I make an end of my letter, written with the hand of him which I would were yours.

H. R.

Letter Seventeenth To Anne Boleyn

The reasonable request of your last letter, with the pleasure also that I take to know them true, causeth me to send you these news. The legate which we most desire arrived at Paris on Sunday or Monday last past, so that I trust by the next Monday to hear of his arrival at Calais: and then I trust within a while after to enjoy that which I have so long longed for, to God's pleasure and our both comforts.

No more to you at this present, mine own darling, for lack of time, but that I would you were in mine arms, or I in yours, for I think it long since I kissed you.

Written after the killing of a hart, at eleven of the clock, minding, with God's grace, to-morrow, mightily timely, to kill another, by the hand which, I trust, shortly shall be yours.

HENRY R.

Letter Eighteenth To Anne Boleyn

To inform you what joy it is to me to understand of your conformableness with reason, and of the suppressing of your inutile and vain thoughts with the bridle of reason. I assure you all the good in this world could not counterpoise for my satisfaction the knowledge and certainty thereof, wherefore, good sweetheart, continue the same, not only in this, but in all your doings hereafter; for thereby shall come, both to you and me, the greatest quietness that may be in this world.

The cause why the bearer stays so long, is the business I have had to dress up gear for you; and which I trust, ere long to cause you occupy: then I trust to occupy yours, which shall be recompense enough to me for all my pains and labour.

The unfeigned sickness of this well-willing legate doth somewhat retard his access to your person; but I trust verily, when God shall send him

health, he will with diligence recompense his demur. For I know well where he hath said (touching the saying and bruit that he is thought imperial) that it shall be well known in this matter that he is not imperial; and thus, for lack of time, sweetheart, farewell.

Written with the hand which fain would be yours, and so is the heart.

R. H.

Finis

Notes

Love Letters of Henry viii to Anne Boleyn

By J. O. Halliwell Phillips

The letters of Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn, perhaps the most remarkable documents of the kind known to exist, were published at Oxford in 1720 by Hearne, in a volume entitled *_Roberti de Avesbury Historia de mirabilibus gestis Edwardi III_*, and inserted in the third volume of the Harleian Miscellany, 1745. These two editions differ considerably from each other, and still more so from the transcripts here given, which are taken from the edition printed at Paris by M. Meon, who held a situation in the Manuscript Department of the Bibliothèque de Roi. The fifth and thirteenth, however, which are not comprehended in the Vatican collection, are supplied from Hearne's work. Of the seventeen letters of which the series consists, eight are written in English and nine in French.

They appear to have been written after Anne Boleyn had been sent away from court, in consequence of reports injurious to her reputation, which had begun to be publicly circulated. Her removal indeed was so abrupt that she had resolved never to return. The king soon repented his harshness, and strove to persuade her to come back; but it was a long time, and not without great trouble, before he could induce her to comply. Her retirement did not take place before the month of May, 1528; this is proved by a letter from Fox, Bishop of Hereford, to Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, dated the 4th of May, in that year, in which the writer, who had just returned from Rome, whither he had been sent to negotiate the king's divorce, gives an account of his landing at Sandwich on the 2nd, of his arrival on the same night at Greenwich, where the king then was, and of the order he received from him to go to the apartments of Anne Boleyn, which were in the Tiltyard, and inform her how anxious he had been to hasten the arrival of the legate, and how much he was rejoiced by it.

This letter, formerly in the collection of Harley, Earl of Oxford, is now at Rome.

It must have been very soon afterwards that Anne Boleyn left the court. In fact, in the first letter (4 of this series) the king excuses himself for being under the necessity of parting from her. In the second (6) he complains of the dislike which she shows to return to court; but in neither of them does he allude to the pestilential disease which in that year committed such ravages in England. In the third (10), however, he does advert to it as a disorder which has prevailed for some time, and on which he makes some observations.

Between this letter, probably written in the month of July, and the sixth (17), in which the king speaks of the arrival of the legate in Paris, and which must have been written about the end of September, there are two letters (1 and 5) certainly written within a few days of each other. In the second of these two, *viz.*, the fifth of this series, the king expresses his extreme satisfaction which he has received from the lady's answer to his request. In the effusion of his gratitude, he pays a visit to his mistress, and both address a letter (8) to Cardinal Wolsey, in which Henry manifests his astonishment at not having yet heard of the arrival of Campeggio, the legate, in Paris. The date of this letter may thus be fixed in the month of September.

The fourth (1), apparently written in August, is the most interesting of the whole collection, inasmuch as it fixes the period of the commencement of the king's affection for Anne Boleyn. He complains of "having been above a whole year struck with the dart of love," and that he is not yet certain whether he shall succeed in finding a place in the heart and affections of her whom he loves.

The last letter (18), which makes mention of the illness of the legate as the cause of the delay in the affair of the divorce, shows that this correspondence ended in May, 1529, at which time the court of legates was open for the final decision of that point.

Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn, subsequently created Earl of Wiltshire, after passing many years at the court of Claude, queen of Francis I of France, returned to England about the end of the year 1525, at the age of eighteen. Here she was soon appointed maid of honour to Queen Katherine, and attracted the particular attentions of Henry VIII, who was then engaged in soliciting a divorce from the Pope. The marked preference shown by the king for Anne Boleyn raised so much jealousy and slander that it was thought advisable by her family to remove the new favourite from the court; and it was during this retirement at Hever, a seat of her father's in Kent, that these letters were addressed to her by her royal lover. It was no doubt to render them the more agreeable that he wrote some of them in French. They breathe a fondness and an ardour which could scarcely leave room to doubt the sincerity of his love.

¶

We have reprinted Mr. Halliwell Phillips to call attention to the change in order in this edition. A very little study of the letters themselves

showed that the old order was impossible. The first six fall into a group by themselves, the 6th being the first to which we gave a nearly approximate date (July, 1527), before Anne's return to court. Henry's passion must date therefore from 1526. The 7th is fixed by references in other correspondence to February, 1528, and the 8th to June before she left the court. The 9th, 10th and 11th relate to the sweating sickness (end of June, order fixed by incidental references), and the 12th is after July 5th; the 13th and 14th are before her return. The reference to his book in No. 15 fixes the date as August, and No. 16 is fixed for August 20th, by Wolsey's finding a lodging for Anne. No. 17 is fixed for September (16th?) by Campeggio's arrival at Paris (September 14, 1528), and No. 18 by his illness as towards the end of October. The scheme had been partly worked out when the editor observed that Mr. Brewer had already arranged them in his Calendar of State Papers, and to him therefore this order is due.

The old arrangement was 4, 6, 10, 1, 5, 17, 16, 2, 11, 3, 13, 9, 12, 7, 14, 15, 18, 8.

Page x. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written July, 1527. "Aut illic, aut nullibi." Either there, or nowhere.

The signature means "H. seeks no other (heart). R."

xiii. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ This letter was written in July, 1527.

xvi. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written February, 1528. "Ultra posse non est esse." One can't do more than the possible.

xviii. _Anne Boleyn to Cardinal Wolsey._ MS. _Cott. Vitellius_, B. xii. f. 4. Written June 11, 1528. Printed by Ellis as from Katherine of Arragon. There is another letter from Anne to Wolsey, thanking him for a present. It is very similar to this, and is found in MS. _Cott. Otho._ c. x. f. 218 (printed in _Burnet_, i, 104, and in _Ellis_, Original Letters, vol. i).

xxii. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written June 16, 1528.

xxv. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ This letter was written June 20. "It." The sweating sickness. This is the 1528 epidemic.

"Your brother." George Boleyn, afterwards Viscount Rochford, executed 1536 on a charge of incest.

xxviii. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written about June 22, 1528. "Welze" is the same person as "Welshe" on p. xxx.

xxx. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written July 6 (?), 1528. "Suche" is probably Zouch.

"Destain." Stain.

xxxiv. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written July 20, 1528.

xxxvii. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written July 21, 1528.

xxxix. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written August, 1528. "Elengeness."
Loneliness, misery.

"My book." On the unlawfulness of his marriage with Katherine.

xli. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written August 20, 1528.

xliii. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written September 16, 1528. Campeggio
actually arrived at Calais on Monday, September 14.

xlv. _Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn._ Written at the end of October, 1528.

Transcriber's Note:

The original text contains decorative illustrations that are not
represented in this text file.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LOVE LETTERS OF HENRY VIII TO ANNE
BOLEYN; WITH NOTES ***

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