

SUMMARY: The document below is a copy in Lord Burghley's hand of a letter to Oxford dated 15 December 1587, written in response to a letter from Oxford alleging that Lord Burghley had done nothing to prefer him to advancement.

For Sir John Wotton (1550-1597), to whom Oxford was distantly related, see his will, TNA PROB 11/89/439, in which he leaves a bequest to Oxford and his son, Henry de Vere, and appoints Oxford as his executor:

Item, I will and devise all my said annuity and yearly rent of threescore six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence and all the arrearages of my annuity and yearly rent of one hundred pounds, and all my annuities and yearly rents whatsoever unto the right honourable Edward, Earl of Oxford, and Henry, Lord Bulbeck, to have and to hold all the said annuities and yearly rents immediately from and after the full end and expiration of the said term of five years aforesaid unto the said Edward, Earl of Oxford, and Henry, Lord Bulbeck, and to the heirs of the said Henry, Lord Bulbeck, forever;

And I do make and ordain the said Edward, Earl of Oxford, executor of this my last will and testament.

I received your letter late yesternight when I was in such pain of my head as I scarcely could read it, much less answer it.

I perceive by it an opinion of your Lordship's that you think it hath been and may be in my power, considering, as you write, that the managing of all causes passeth through my hands, to strengthen your estate, and therefore you seem to infer that the lack of your preferment cometh of me, for that you could never hear of any way prepared for your preferment.

My Lord, for a direct answer, I affirm for a truth, and that to be well proved, that your Lordship mistaketh my power, howsoever you say that I manage th' affairs, the trouble whereof is laid upon me, but no power to do myself or any kin or friend any good, but rather impeached, yea, crossed, which I am taught these many years patiently to endure, yea, to conceal.

Secondly, that there hath been no ways prepared for your preferment, I do utterly deny, and can particularly make it manifest by testimony of councillors how often I have propounded ways to prefer you to services, but why these could not take place I must not particularly set them down in writing, lest either I discover the hinderers or offend yourself in showing th' allegations to impeach your Lordship from such preferments.

And therefore if your Lordship please not to admit my defence by avowing to your Lordship on my faith afore God that I have at all times when occasion served had your Lordship in remembrance to be used in honourable service, then I must content myself

with the wrong you do me in noting me, as you do very roundly, that you find yourself by me little strengthened in estate and nothing in friendship.

And so I conclude, my Lord, that finding you thus affected, I mind not to dispute of this matter with you by any writing, but wish you such other friends as you may be better persuaded of than you are of me.

As for the matter of John Wotton's report of my speeches of your Lordship, wherewith all the court was full that you were offended with me, I have charged John Wotton therewith, who doth in a sort deny it, but if he said to your Lordship that I used any word to your disgrace in council, I affirm to your Lordship that he lieth, and so with me do all the councillors that heard my speech affirm him therein to have belied me. But I leave him to his own defence, and sorry I am that your Lordship would put him in a balance of credit against me afore you had heard of me.

Your Lordship must take in good part my hasty writing, for neither my health nor my leisure doth permit me to write so advisedly as otherwise the cause requireth, and yet, my Lord, I hope I write nothing but that I may avow, howsoever you may in your doubtful mind of me otherwise interpret it.

From my house in Westminster this 15th of December 1587.

Your Lordship's to deserve well.

Endorsed: 15 December 1587. Copy of my letter to the Earl of Oxford. [In another hand: Upon his charging him with neglect of his endeavour to prefer him at court.]