

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 3 September 1597 from Henry Herbert (c.1538-1601), 2nd Earl of Pembroke, to Lord Burghley discussing the proposed marriage of Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere (1584-1631), to the 2nd Earl's eldest son and heir, William Herbert (1580-1630), 3rd Earl of Pembroke.

For an earlier letter on the topic from the 2nd Earl of Pembroke to Lord Burghley dated 16 August 1597, see TNA SP 12/264/84, f. 117.

For an undated letter endorsed 16 August 1597 from Mary (nee Sidney) Herbert (1561-1621), Countess of Pembroke, to Lord Burghley referring to the proposed match, see TNA SP 12/264/85.

Oxford expressed his favourable view of the proposed marriage in a letter to Lord Burghley dated 8 September 1597. See TNA SP 12/264/111, f. 151.

The extant letters indicate that the 2nd Earl of Pembroke and the Countess initiated the negotiations, and that their son, William Herbert, was agreeable to the marriage. It appears Lord Burghley entertained doubts because of Bridget Vere's youth. In any event, the marriage did not take place, and shortly after 28 April 1599, Bridget Vere married Francis Norris (1579-1622), 1st Earl of Berkshire. See TNA SP 12/270/91, f. 159 and TNA SP 12/270/101, f. 176.

For a discussion of the 1597 marriage negotiations, see also Young, Frances Berkeley, *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*, (London: David Nutt, 1912), pp. 62-6 at:

<https://archive.org/details/marysidneycounte00younuoft/page/62/mode/2up>

In the letter, the 2nd Earl mentions his 'servant Massinger'. According to the *ODNB*, this was Arthur Massinger (c.1550-1603), the father of the playwright, Philip Massinger:

Philip Massinger (1583–1640), playwright, was born in November 1583, probably in Salisbury, and baptized at St Thomas's, Salisbury, on 24 November 1583. He was the son of Arthur Massinger (c.1550–1603), fellow of Merton College, Oxford, MP, general agent for the earls of Pembroke, and examiner to the council in the marches of Wales, and of Anne Crompton (d. in or after 1614), whose father was a merchant of Stafford and London.

The transcript below is taken from *CSPD 1595-97*, pp. 497-8. See:

'Queen Elizabeth - Volume 264: September 1597', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595-97*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1869), pp. 496-507. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1595-7/pp496-507> [accessed 24 May 2020].

<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/>

My servant Massinger has delivered your most kind letters and acquainted me in reference to the intended marriage between my eldest son and the Lady Bridget. First, that your daughter [=granddaughter] is but 13 years of age, and that you are doubtful whether a marriage would bind her now as it would my son. Secondly, whether she should, in the time of my son's travel, remain with you or with my wife. Thirdly, that for perfecting of conveyances between us, you chose Justice Owen to join with Baron Ewens, whom I had named for myself. Lastly, that if I would come up to Parliament, this matter might be concluded with more convenience.

For the first, I have often heard that after a woman has attained 12 years she can by law consent and be bound by marriage. If this be the case, the marriage of your daughter may lawfully proceed, and she by it shall be no less bound than my son, yet their continuance together may be deferred until you think good. But for preventing many inconveniences, I prefer a marriage to a contract.

For the second, I think it most convenient that after the marriage, and my son is gone to travel, your daughter should remain with my wife, whose care of her shall answer the nearness whereby she shall then be linked unto her.

For the third, I very well like of Justice Owen to be joined with Baron Ewens, and doubt not but through their good care all things shall be concluded to our contentments.

For the fourth, I cannot come to Parliament without extreme peril to my health, and my presence for this private business is not of necessity, for I will make a jointure proportionable to what you will give in marriage with your daughter.

I seek not by this match to enrich myself or advance my younger children, for whatsoever you give I am content that the young couple presently have, and will increase the same with as great a yearly allowance as my estate and course of life can spare. Upon hearing from you, I will so instruct Baron Ewens that my absence shall be no hindrance. My son shall come up himself at the beginning of Parliament, both to attend her Majesty's pleasure for his intended travel, and to perform what shall be agreed upon for his proposed marriage. Good my Lord, fail not to procure to me licence to be absent from the Parliament, as I am to return into Wales to attend her Majesty's service. My proxy I give to you.