

SUMMARY: The letter below was written on 8 April 1579 by the Spanish ambassador in England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604), to King Philip II of Spain in anticipation of the visit to England of Queen Elizabeth's suitor, Francois (1554-1584), Duke of Alencon and Anjou. Mendoza says that the three hostages given were to be Oxford, his second cousin Philip Howard (1557-1595), Earl of Surrey and later 13th Earl of Arundel, and Oxford's half-sister Katherine's son, Frederick (1559-1585), 4th Lord Windsor. Alencon arrived in England on 17 August 1579, apparently without any hostages having been exchanged, and stayed until 27 August at Greenwich and Richmond. The well-known tennis court quarrel between Oxford and Philip Sidney apparently occurred during Alencon's brief visit to England. The quarrel almost certainly had its roots in the fact that Oxford supported the French marriage, along with the Earl of Sussex, Lord Burghley and others, while Sidney opposed it, following the leadership of his uncle, the Earl of Leicester. The quarrel took place while the French commissioners had audience with the Queen in private galleries whose windows looked into the tennis court, and in consequence they were spectators of the quarrel (see *Edward de Vere Newsletter No. 53* on this website). On 18 August 1579, the day after Alencon's arrival in England, John Stubbes' book against the Queen's marriage, *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf*, was printed. The Queen issued a proclamation against it on 29 September, Stubbes' trial swiftly followed, and on 3 November 1579 Stubbes' right hand was cut off in the marketplace at Westminster. John Stubbes was the husband of Oxford's first cousin, Anne Vere, and lived with Oxford's sister, Mary Vere, and her husband Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby d'Eresby. See Berry, Lloyd E., *John Stubbs's Gaping Gulf* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) pp. xxiv, xxvi-vii, xxxv, xlii. The brutal cutting off of a hand was an exceptional punishment in Elizabethan England, and the likelihood that the incident is reflected in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* is a strong one. The transcript below is taken from *Coleccion de Documentos Ineditos para la Historia de España por El Marques de la Fuensanta del Valle, D. José Sancho Rayon y D. Francisco de Zabalburu*, Tomo XCI (Madrid: M. Ginesta Hermanos, Impresores de la Real Casa, 1888, reprinted Kraus Reprint Ltd., Vadux, 1966), pp. 364-5. The translation below is taken from Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs*, Vol. II, 1568-1579, p. 662. The first and last parts of the letter have not been transcribed or translated.

Sobre el dar ostages para la venida de Alanzon, quieren decir que lo fuesen los Condes de Sore y de Axfort y Milord Unisor, proque aunque mozos es gente que por la antigüedad de sus casas tienen cualidad y séquito.

With respect to giving hostages for the coming of Alencon, it is proposed that the Earls of Surrey and Oxford and Lord Windsor should be chosen because, although they are only youths, their houses are very ancient and of high rank.