

SUMMARY: The document below is a copy in Lord Burghley's hand of a letter dated 23 April 1576 written to Queen Elizabeth after Oxford's return from the continent. The letter reveals the very serious difficulties Oxford's refusal to live with his wife, Anne Cecil, caused for both Anne and her father in terms of their service to the Queen.

The copy contains extensive corrections and revisions.

The endorsement states that the letter was delivered by Sir Edward Carey (d.1618), Groom of the Privy Chamber, for whom see Doran, Susan and Norman Jones. eds., *The Elizabethan World*, (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2011), p. 82 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=6iiDBAAQBAJ&pg=PA82&lpg=PA82&dq=%22Edward+Carey%22+%22Chamber%22&source=bl&ots=uIulq46lga&sig=30qcVikXJn5DU Smqs3islZYvZaA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwifp-qA-MXTAhVQzWMKHajPA6sQ6AEIPjAG#v=onepage&q=%22Edward%20Carey%22%20%22Chamber%22&f=false>.

Most Sovereign Lady,

As I was accustomed from the beginning of my service to your Majesty until of late by the permission of your goodness and by occasion of the place wherein I served your Majesty to be frequently an intercessor for others to your Majesty, and therein did find your Majesty always inclinable to give me gracious audience, so now do I find in the latter end of my years a necessary occasion to be an intercessor to your Majesty, or rather an intermediate petitioner for myself, and an intercessor for another next to myself in a cause godly, honest and just, and therefore, having had proof of your Majesty's former favours in causes not so important, I doubt not but to find the like instances(?) of your grace in a cause so near touching myself as your Majesty will conceive it doth.

And yet my intention is not to molest your Majesty with the particularities of the same, neither, as I now do, would I have attempted but(?) that I fear my silence whilst others should be open mouthed(?), either of ignorance or of purpose might occasion some other conceits with your Majesty than I am sure the truth of the cause shall work in you.

To enter to trouble your Majesty with the circumstances of my cause I mean not for sundry respects, but chiefly for 2. The one is that I am very loath to be more cumbersome to your Majesty than need shall compel me, and for reverence borne to your Majesty. The other is for that I hope in God's goodness the success thereof may have a better end than the beginning threateneth.

But your Majesty may think my suit will be very long where I am so long or I begin, and truly, most gracious Sovereign Lady, it is true that the nature of my cause is such as I have no pleasure to enter into it, but had rather seek means to shut it up than to lay it

open, not for lack of the soundness thereof on my part, but for the brickleness of others from whom the groundwork proceedeth.

My suit therefore shall be presently to your Majesty but in general sort, that whereas I am by God's visitation with some infirmity, and yet not great, stayed from coming to do my duty to your Majesty at this time, and my daughter, the Countess of Oxford, also occasioned, to her great grief, to be absent from your Majesty's court, and that the occasion of her absence many be diversly reported to your Majesty, as I said before, by some of ignorance, by some percase otherwise, it may please your Majesty, because the ground and working thereupon toucheth me as nearly as any worldly cause in my conceit can do, to continue your princely consideration of us both, of me as an old worn servant that dare compare with the best, the greatest, the oldest and the youngest for loyalty and devotion, giving place to many others in other worldly qualities, as your Majesty shall prefer any before me, and of my daughter, your Majesty's most humble young servant, as of one that is towards your Majesty in dutiful love and fear, yea, in fervent admiration of your graces to contend with any her equals, and in the cause betwixt my Lord of Oxford and her, whether it be for respect of misliking in me or misdeeming of her, whereof I cannot yet know the certainty, I do avow in the presence of God and of his angels, whom I do call as ministers of his ire if in this I do utter any untruth, I have not in his absence on my part omitted any occasion to do him good for himself and his causes. No, I have not in thought imagined anything offensive to him, but contrariwise I have been as diligent for his causes to his benefit as I have been for my own, and this I pronounce of knowledge for myself, and therefore if, contrary to my desert, I should otherwise be judged or suspected, I should receive great injury.

For my daughter, though nature would make me to speak favourably, yet now I have taken God and his angels to be witnesses of my writing, I renounce nature, and protest simply to your Majesty I did never see in her behaviour in word or deed, nor ever could perceive by any other mean but that she hath always used herself honestly, chastely and lovingly towards him, and now upon expectation of his coming, so filled with joy thereof, so desirous to see the time of his arrival approach as in my judgment no young lover rooted or sotted in love of any person could more excessively show the same with all comely tokens, or when, after his arrival, some doubts were cast of his acceptance of her true innocency, seemed to make her so bold as she never cast any care of things past, but wholly reposed herself with assurance to be well used by him, and with that confidence, and importunity made to me, she went to him, and there missed of her expectation, and so attendeth, as her duty is, to gain some part of her hope.

And now, lest I should enter further into the matter, and not meaning to trouble your Majesty, I do end with this humble request, that in anything that may hereof follow wherein I may have wrong with dishonesty offered to me, I may have your Majesty's princely favour to seek my just defence for me and mine, not meaning, for respect of my old service nor of the place whereunto your Majesty hath called me (though unworthy), to challenge any extraordinary favour, for my service hath been but a piece of my duty, and my vocation been too great a reward.

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And so I do remain constant to serve your Majesty in what place soever your Majesty shall command, even in as base as I have done in great.

*Note at foot of document:*

In some part making suit to write it new, I have, I think, rather shortened than enlarged it.

Endorsed: 23 April 1576. To the Queen's Majesty, delivered by Mr Edward Carey of the Chamber