

SUMMARY: The document below is a copy in Lord Burghley's hand of a letter dated 12 December 1581 to Oxford from his wife, Anne Cecil. Oxford had estranged himself from Anne after his return from the continent in April 1576 on the ground that Elizabeth Vere, born to Anne on 2 July 1575, was not his child.

Oxford and Anne's reconciliation was discussed in the context of Oxford's release from house arrest in the summer of 1581. Oxford had been imprisoned in the Tower, and later placed under house arrest, after his mistress, Anne Vavasour, gave birth to Oxford's illegitimate son, Edward Vere. See a letter dated 23 March 1581 from Sir Francis Walsingham to Henry Hastings, 3rd Earl of Huntingdon, advising of the birth of Edward Vere, Huntington Library HA 13066; a letter dated 12 July 1581 from Sir Francis Walsingham to Lord Burghley mentioning the possibility of a reconciliation between Oxford and Anne, TNA SP 12/149/67, ff. 156-7; and a copy of a letter dated 13 July 1581 from Lord Burghley to Sir Christopher Hatton, thanking him for discussing the issue with the Queen, BL Add. 15891, f. 77.

The endorsement indicates that Anne's letter was written in response to a letter from Oxford, now lost, in which Oxford appears to have warned Anne of his financial difficulties, which were serious by late 1581. Her reply indicates her willingness to bear his adverse fortune. It is difficult not to admire Anne's character, and to wish that Oxford had appreciated her virtues earlier in his life.

The Lady Drury mentioned in Anne's letter was Elizabeth (nee Stafford) Drury, wife of Sir William Drury (1550-1590). She was the daughter of Queen Elizabeth's Mistress of the Robes, Dorothy Stafford (1526-1604), and was herself a Lady of the Queen's Bedchamber. See:

http://www.tudorwomen.com/?page_id=707

Elizabeth Stafford (c.1546-February 6, 1598/9) was the daughter of Sir William Stafford (d. May 1556) and Dorothy Stafford (October 1, 1526-September 22, 1604). She was in exile during Mary Tudor's reign with her parents and returned to England in 1559. On November 28, 1568 she became a chamberer to Queen Elizabeth at £20 per annum. Later she was a lady of the privy chamber and bedchamber. On November 8, 1573, at court, she married Sir William Drury of Hawstead, Suffolk (May 30, 1550-January 18, 1590), by whom she had Robert (January 30, 1575-1615), Frances (June 13, 1576-1642), Elizabeth (January 4, 1577/8-February 26, 1653/4), Charles (d.1600), Susanna (1584-September 29, 1606), Diana (d.1638), and Dorothea (d.yng). The queen provided her wedding gown. Both Elizabeth and her daughters received gifts of clothing from Queen Elizabeth and the queen visited Hawstead in 1578 and 1587. In January 1587, she was commanded to leave court following the discovery of a conspiracy involving her brother, William Stafford but she was later reinstated. After her husband was killed in France by Sir John Borough in a duel over precedence, Elizabeth was left deeply in debt. Her husband owed £6000. The Drury estate was seized by the Crown in 1591. In 1590, Elizabeth married Sir John Scott of Nettlestead, Kent (d.1616). Portraits: with one of her

children; attributed to William Seger c.1591-5 (identified by some as her daughter, Elizabeth Drury; effigy on her tomb in Nettlestead, Kent.

For a copy in Lord Burghley's hand of Anne's earlier letter to Oxford dated 7 December 1581, see BL Lansdowne 104/63, ff. 164-5.

My very good Lord, I most heartily thank you for your letter, and am most sorry to perceive how you are unquieted with the uncertainty of the world, whereof I myself am not without some taste. But seeing you will me to assure myself of anything that I may as your wife challenge of you, I will the more patiently abide the adversity which otherwise I feel, and if God would so permit it, and that it might be good for you, I would bear the greater part of your adverse fortune, and make it my comfort to bear part with you.

As for my father, I do assure you, whatsoever hath been reported of him, I know no man can wish better to you than he doth, and yet the practices in court, I fear, do seek to make contrary shows.

For my Lady Drury, I deal as little with her as any can, and care no more for her than you will have me, but I have been driven sometimes, for avoiding of malice and envy, to do that both with her and others which I would not with my will do.

Good my Lord, assure yourself it is you whom only I love and fear, and so am desirous above all the world to please you, wishing that I might hear oftener from you until better fortune will have us meet together.

Endorsed: 12 December 1581, a copy of the Countess of Oxford's letter for answer to her husband's letter