

SUMMARY: The document below summarizes a letter dated 15 August 1571 written from Hatfield by Lord Burghley to Edward Manners (1549–1587), 3rd Earl of Rutland, who was then in Paris (according to the *ODNB*, Rutland ‘traveled in France between January and October 1571, sending Burghley his impressions’).

The letter makes clear Lord Burghley’s surprise at Oxford’s offer to marry Anne Cecil, and hints that Burghley had considered Edward Manners as a possible husband for Anne:

Truly, my Lord, my goodwill served me to have moved such a matter as this in another [direction than this] is, but having some occasion to doubt of the issue of the matter, I did forbear, and in mine own concept I could have as well have liked there as in any other place in England.

Lord Burghley’s statement that he loves Oxford as dearly as his own son is of interest, as is the following statement:

And surely, my Lord, by dealing with him I find that which I often heard of your Lordship, that there is much more in him of understanding than any stranger to him would think.

Although Oxford was originally placed as a royal ward in Lord Burghley’s household, it would appear that in latter years he had not resided there, and that there had been little personal contact between Oxford and Lord Burghley. This circumstance lends further credibility to Lord Burghley’s statement that he had been caught off-guard by Oxford’s unexpected offer to marry Anne Cecil.

The summary of the letter below is taken from *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part IV. The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, G.C.B., Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1888), Vol. I, p. 95, at:

<https://archive.org/details/hists52199677/page/n121/mode/2up>

I am glad of your disposition to return, though I like not the cause, which I see is to have regard to your title of Walthamstow. I do not think that any evidence can be made thereof to your prejudice, but your presence will preserve your right. In that or any other cause, you may command me as well as any of your friends in England.

I think it doth seem strange to your Lordship to here of a purposed determination in my Lord of Oxford to marry with my daughter, and so before his Lordship moved it to me might I have thought it if any other had moved it to me than himself. For at his own motion I could not well imagine what to think, considering I never meant to seek it, nor hoped of it. And yet reason moved me to think well of my Lord, and to knowledge

myself greatly beholding to him, as indeed I do. Truly, my Lord, after I was acquainted of the former intention of a marriage with Mr Philip Sidney, whom always I loved and esteemed, I was fully determined to have of myself moved no marriage for my daughter until she should have been near 16, that with moving I might also conclude. And yet I thought it not inconvenient in the meantime, being free to hearken to any motion made by such others as I should have cause to like. Truly, my Lord, my goodwill served me to have moved such a matter as this in another [direction than this] is, but having some occasion to doubt of the issue of the matter, I did forbear, and in mine own concept I could have as well have liked there as in any other place in England. Percase your Lordship may guess where I mean, and so shall I, for I will name nobody.

Now that the matter is determined betwixt my Lord of Oxford and me, I confess to your Lordship I do honour him as much as I can any subject, and I love him so dearly from my heart as I do mine own son, and in any case that may touch him for his honour and weal I shall think mine own interest therein. And surely, my Lord, by dealing with him I find that which I often heard of your Lordship, that there is much more in him of understanding than any stranger to him would think. And for mine own part, I find that whereof I take comfort in his wit and knowledge grown by good observation.