

SUMMARY: The letter below was written at Poitiers on 24 September 1577 by the English ambassador in France, Sir Amias Paulet (c.1532-1588) to Sir Francis Walsingham. Paulet was appointed ambassador in September 1576, and served for three years. His letter books survive from May 1577 to August 1578 (see Bodl. Oxf., letter-books, MS Rawl. A. 331, Add. MSS c81-2). In an earlier letter of 10 July 1577, Paulet had advised Walsingham that 'the two young Veres', accompanied by Denny and Walter Williams, had arrived in Poitiers, and were 'resolved to follow the Duke of Guise into Champagne'. The Duke of Guise was Henri de Lorraine (1550-1588), Duke of Guise, who in 1576 had formed the Catholic League. The 'two young Veres' have been identified by Bossy as Sir Francis Vere (1560/1-1609) and his younger brother, Robert Vere, two of the sons of Oxford's youngest uncle, Geoffrey de Vere (see Bossy, John, 'English Catholics and the French marriage, 1577-81', *Recusant History*, 5:1 (1959), pp. 2-16). However *The Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that 'the two young Veres' were Francis, then about seventeen, and his older brother, John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall. For the will of John Vere of Kirby Hall, see TNA PROB 11/143, ff. 510-15. For a letter written by Sir Francis Vere on 17 November 1605 mentioning his time in France in 1577, see Cecil Papers, 113/16.

In the letter below, Paulet defends himself for having given the elder of the two Veres a horse at the latter's request. Paulet has been asked about the incident by Walsingham, and fears that his action has been called into question because the two Veres had professed their intention to serve on the King's side in the French wars of religion under the Catholic Duke of Guise. Paulet explains that he bestowed a horse on the elder of the two Veres because he could not allow a relation of the Earl of Oxford to go to Paris on foot, that he had not supplied him with a horse which could be used for service in the wars, and that in any event great personages in England had recommended others to him who intended to serve the King's party under the Duke of Guise. Moreover, Mr Lok had told him that only those Englishmen who served on the King's side in the French wars of religion had any reputation among the nobility at Queen Elizabeth's court. Paulet adds that 'young fellows' were permitted by the Queen to serve on whichever side they preferred, Catholic or Huguenot, and that those who chose to serve on the French King's side (i.e. the Catholic side) 'were not disliked by her Majesty', and states that he had used this very argument recently with King Henri III's mother, Queen Catherine de Medici, to defend Queen Elizabeth's government against charges that it was taking the Huguenot side against King Henri III in the wars of religion. The copy of the letter below is taken from Ogle, Octavius, ed., *Copy-book of Sir Amias Poulet's letters written during his embassy to France (A.D. 1577)* (London: J.B. Nichols, 1866) pp. 117-9.

To Mr Walsingham

Whereas your Honour desireth to be advertised if I did give a horse to the young Vere, I begin to doubt herein if my doings have been brought in question, and shall not be quiet until I hear from you of the true cause of this your motion, whereof I shall most humbly

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pray you, not doubting but the truth of the matter will defend me against the malice of the envious.

The two young Veres came to this town accompanied with Denny and Williams, and after two or three days the elder Vere and Williams came unto me (the young Vere and Denny I did not see), and after some words of courtesy this Vere told me that he came into this country with intent to serve in the wars, and finding the army of Monsieur broken, and thereby frustrate of his expectation, was constrained to return to Paris, and being unprovided of money to hire post-horses, should be constrained to make this voyage on his feet onleat [=unless] I did provide him of some remedy, and therefore desired me to do him the pleasure to bestow a horse upon him, saying that he doubted not but that the Earl of Oxford would be thankful unto me for it.

I answered I had not so many horses as I had servants, that I was subject to daily removes, that I was far from any mean to recover new horses, and therefore might not well spare the horses which I had already. He confessed me he was very bold with me upon so small acquaintance (as indeed I had never seen him before), but was constrained thereunto by necessity, whereof he prayed me to have such consideration as I might. I told him that I would be ashamed for the honour of my country and for the reputation of the Earl of Oxford that he should go to Paris on feet, and therefore would provide him of an ambling nag which would be good enough and great enough to carry him to Paris, trusting that he did not look for a horse of service at my hands, which I could not spare in these dangerous times.

I caused the horse to be delivered to this gentleman according to my promise, who sold him the next day, and prayed Mr Lok (who was then here, and that said this much to some of my servants) to say nothing of this horse to my Lord of Oxford. The asking of the horse so earnestly, the selling of him so suddenly, and his unwillingness that my Lord of Oxford should know that he had been any way beholding unto me, do decipher to the disposition of the gentleman. God send him better company to make him a better man! Thus I have delivered unto you truly and faithfully how and in what manner this horse was given, and now it may please you to give me leave to answer an objection which perchance is not meant or intended.

It may be said that, knowing his intention to serve the King's party under the leading of the Duke of Guise, I ought not to have given him any aid or succour. Surely if he had been my kinsman or familiar friend, I would not have failed to have dissuaded the voyage, but others had been recommended not long before by great personages of England to serve here in like sort, and Mr Lok had told me that those only had the reputation among the nobility of the court that sought to serve the King's side, and therefore, in my simple opinion, I had played the fool if I had made a quarrel of this matter, which did neither touch me nor import the cause to any purpose, and yet you may be assured no man might persuade me to give to any man any matter meet for service in this case. And to be plain with you, I was not sorry to see some young fellows, especially such as were of no great countenance or service, to join themselves with the King's party, which might serve to have excused the young ( ) and such others as Mr Lok said to be

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then ready to go to Rochelle, and have been affirmed that young fellows sought there as best liked them, and that such as served the French King were not misliked by her Majesty, and indeed I did help myself with this argument in my speech with Queen Mother about that time, as may appear by my speeches. I am jealous of my poor credit, which maketh me to be so troublesome unto you, not doubting but that your Honour will parson me in a greater fault.

The Duke of Montpensier arriving here yesterday, I trusted to have had audience this day of the King, but new occasions have deferred my audience and have caused this sudden dispatch, as may appear unto your Honour by this copy enclosed of my letters to her Majesty sent herewithal. And thus I recommend myself wholly unto you, as one that is and will be always yours at commandment. Poitiers, 24 September.