

SUMMARY: This letter from Lord Henry Howard written on 14 September to Sir Francis Walsingham is endorsed '1582', which may be in error. In it, Howard implies that Leicester maliciously caused Oxford to accuse Howard of construing a prophecy concerning the succession to the crown of England ('it pleased some that had the guiding of my false accuser's tongue to bestow this favour on me for a token of old courtesy'). As Howard himself admits, his interpretation of this prophecy had been a sticking point with the Queen ('The thing which her Majesty was wont to urge against me chiefly was the sight, concealment & construction of a prophecy'), and both Howard and Arundel were examined about it (see SP 12/151/44, ff. 98-9; SP 12/151/47, ff. 105-6; SP 12/151/48, ff. 107-8; and SP 12/151/57, ff. 118-19). However, contrary to Howard's surmise, this allegation does not seem to have originated with Oxford, and it is difficult to see how it could have; Howard claims the book was written in Oxford's own hand, and if Oxford had made such an accusation he would have been implicated by association. Howard's jibe against Leicester in this letter seems to have worked against him. It seems likely that it came to Leicester's attention, and caused the failure of Howard's suit, through Walsingham, for reinstatement in the Queen's favour. In consequence, realizing that he would get nowhere with the Queen without Leicester's help, Howard wrote an obsequious letter on 27 October 1581 to Leicester, begging his forgiveness for all past injuries (see SP 12/150/51, ff. 97-98). This sequence of events appears to date the letter below to 14 September 1581, rather than 14 September 1582.

Upon your honourable and kind advice, good Mr Secretary, I have presumed to make sacrifice of my contrite and humble heart unto her Majesty, desiring nothing more than opportunity to seal by proof what I have already bound by promise.

To present the same I took none to be so fit as you, not only in respect of your great favour to myself, but as much for your understanding in the matter.

The thing which her Majesty was wont to urge against me chiefly was the sight, concealment & construction of a prophecy which I will take my oath upon the Bible that I never saw. Beside, they that were acquainted with that book of babies in my Lord of Oxford's hand will clear me both from sight and knowledge by their oath, and yet this would not serve when it pleased some that had the guiding of my false accuser's tongue to bestow this favour on me for a token of old courtesy, lest by standing clear in a matter of most moment I might have been too much at liberty. But my hope is that since so much enquiry hath been made after faults that never were, either they that were indeed, and stink before the face of God, shall sustain due punishment, as I that have been falsely charged shall enjoy the comfort of a subject in the presence of his sovereign which was never yet refused to the well deserving. We live under a gracious princess and a just law, which makes me hope that innocency shall be more regarded in a case of justice than the malice of the mighty.

My suit is only for trial by extremity or restitution by favour. I come not as [+a] guilty person for pardon in respect of any other fault than hath been punished by durance & disgrace, but that the veil which shadows truth and giveth cause of jealousy to those that understand no more than the senses grope may be speedily removed, wherefore recommending not this suit alone, but my life & service also, wholly and only to yourself, who shall ever dispose of them, I humbly take my leave this 14 of September.

Your Honour's humbly & assuredly at commandment,
Henry Howard

Addressed: To the right honourable Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary to her Majesty, & one of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council.

Endorsed: 1[4?] September 1582, the Lord Henry Howard