

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 7 August 1595 from Oxford to Lord Burghley concerning his offer to increase the Queen's profits from the tin mines. In the letter Oxford acknowledges receipt from Lord Burghley of letters advising of the return of Thomas Middleton (1549x56-1631) from Cornwall, and of the renewal of his suit for the tin monopoly by Thomas Sackville (c.1536-1608), 1st Baron Buckhurst. Oxford advises that Middleton's report differs little from what Oxford has already reported to the Queen. As for Lord Buckhurst's new offer of £7600 a year, it is not so advantageous to the Queen as Oxford's; however if Lord Buckhurst and his agents wish to join with Oxford in his offer, they are welcome to do so, which will yield the Queen £10,000 a year. Oxford accuses Lord Buckhurst of continuing to persuade Oxford's agents and co-offerors to abandon him, thereby hindering the Queen's service, and specifically of having offered Alderman John Catcher a bribe of £1000 worth of tin at £20 the 1000 lbs. if he would entice his friends away from Oxford, of having earlier enticed Richard Carmarden away from Oxford, and of having, through one Hazels, enticed away the merchants who were Oxford's co-offerors. Oxford also alludes to other unspecified practices of Lord Buckhurst's which he reserves until 'a fitter time' to disclose to Lord Burghley. Oxford says further that there is a widespread belief that the Queen will grant the tin monopoly to Lord Buckhurst for a lesser profit than Oxford has offered her, which makes it difficult for Oxford to deal with the merchants.

At the end of the letter Oxford turns to the subject of the £1000 yearly allowance which the 6th Earl of Derby had promised to ensure for the maintenance of Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth Vere, after their marriage on 26 January 1595, a promise which he had yet to put into effect.

My very good Lord, I have received your letters touching Middleton's return, and also of the Lord of Buckhurst's renewing of his suit.

For Middleton's report, he hath not differed much from that I have already informed her Majesty, only this, I consider that this year is more plentiful for the tin than hath been this forty years before, & that it seems contrary to former objections that the mines rather increase than diminish their portion, & Middleton hath not yet informed (nor shall be able till the next coinage) the full quantity.

For my Lord of Buckhurst, he doth not yet arrive to the proffer which I have made to her Majesty, which she shall better perceive by perusing my notes of information, sith by the agentie [agency?] dealing for the half, my undertakers are to pay five thousand pound yearly & certain. And if the Lord of Buckhurst with his agents will join for the other half, he nor they by my offer are excluded. So that the whole to her Majesty oft to be made ten thousand pounds by year, wherefore his offer is not so profitable for her Majesty as mine.

Besides, the Lord of Buckhurst persisteth still in a course whereby her Majesty is much hindered, that is he practiseth still mine agents by devices and by open benefits to cause them to give me over, wherein he draws them not from me but from her Majesty.

It is but since Tuesday at night last at [] of the clock he sent to speak with Alderman Catcher, who came unto him the next morning, where the Lord of Buckhurst told him that in his suit of the tin he had much crossed him, wishing he had given him a £1000 he had not dealt with me, and further, if he would draw away his friends, he was assured I could not but fail in undertakers, which thing if he would undertake, for recompense he offered him a £1000 worth of tin for £20 the thousand.

By this dealing I find that I have all this while mistaken the Lord of Buckhurst, whom I thought that he had dealt only for her Majesty's profit, as before he sent me word by one Bullmar(?) [=Bulmer?], encouraging me to proceed in this service, & he would the like, for his part, endeavour the same.

But this dealing conferred with the like when he practised Carmarden from me, and by one Hazels(?) the rest of the undertakers whose names I sent your Lordship, the contrary doth appear.

Also, so long as it shall be holden a firm opinion that the Lord of Buckhurst shall have the suit upon easier conditions than myself, it is hard for me to make it so commodious as indeed otherways I may, for who in reason will give ten when they know her Majesty will be satisficed with a much inferior sum?

There is great difference between mine offer & the Lord of Buckhurst's, both in certainty and uncertainty, for in the certainty mine is ten thousand pound a year, and in uncertainty, as the quantity of tin riseth (as it doth this year) and as the merchants shall find it prosperous to themselves, so her Majesty parting half with them of their gains to increase her proportion (which as my notes plainly set down may happen to be 20 thousand pound some year), from which good hap, besides the surplus in the 10 thousand pound by year, her Majesty doth bar herself by granting it absolutely to the Lord of Buckhurst for seven thousand six hundred pound a year.

Mine absence from the city takes away the commodity which else I might have in more speedy answering of your Lordship, but I do not doubt, if I may have her Majesty's indifferent countenance in the matter, but to make all good that I have informed her, although by such dealings as I have afore set down and others which I reserve to a fitter time, I say not I, but her Majesty, hath been greatly hindered.

I beseech your Lordship that in this, her Majesty's service, wherein I have laboured so long, that you will stand indifferent between the Lord of Buckhurst and me, and so much the rather to yield me your favour by how much you shall see it is more for her Majesty's profit.

I most heartily thank your Lordship for your desire to know of my health, which is not so good yet as I wish it. I find comfort in this air, but no fortune at the court.

I hope your Lordship hath your health, and I shall be glad to hear thereof, and this one thing I have to inform your Lordship before I make an end, and that is, at my coming hither from Cannon Row, the Earl of Derby was very earnest that he might assure a thousand pound a year for my daughter's finding, adding farther that he marvelled that Sir Robert Cecil, her uncle, & I, her father, were so slack to call upon it. Wherefore I shall desire your Lordship, as you shall choose best time, that something may be done therein. My daughter hath put her trust in me both to remember your Lordship and her husband, wherefore I would be glad that some certainty were effected to her mind. Byfleet, this 7 of August, 1595.

Your Lordship's ever to command,

Edward Oxenford

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England; (2) (in Lord Burghley's hand) 7 August 1595, the Earl of Oxford, answer to Middleton's certificate for the tinwork.