

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 3 August 1574 from Lord Burghley to Sir Francis Walsingham concerning Oxford's attempt to regain the Queen's favour. On 1 July 1574 Oxford had left England without licence, travelling to Calais in the company of Lord Edward Seymour (1548-1574), and from thence to Flanders, and 'carrying a great sum of money with him'. The Queen recalled him, and Oxford was back in England by 28 July. Although the Queen's displeasure was somewhat mollified by his return, it was reported that she 'doth not mean to wrap up his contempt without using some kind of reprehension, that he may not think but that his fault is not only to be reproved, but were also to be corrected'.

By 21 August Oxford had won back the Queen's favour because of his loyalty to her when approached by her exiled rebel subjects in Flanders, and had secured from her a promise to grant him licence to travel.

The 'Master Bedingfield' mentioned in the letter is Thomas Bedingfield (d.1613), whose translation of *Cardanus' Comfort* was dedicated to Oxford (see STC 4607 on this website). See the ODNB entry, and his will, TNA PROB 11/122/124.

The postscript at the end of the letter mentions that Oxford had once been tutored by Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577).

Sir, yesternight your letters came to Master Bedingfield and me signifying her Majesty's pleasure that my Lord of Oxford should come to Gloucester now at her Majesty's being there, whereof he, being advertised by us, was very ready to take the journey, showing in himself a mixture of contrary affections, although both reasonable and commendable, the one fearful and doubtful in what sort he shall recover her Majesty's favour because of his offence in departure as he did without licence, the other gladful and resolute to look for a speedy good end because he had in his abode so notoriously rejected the attempts of her Majesty's evil subjects, and in his return set apart all his own particular desires of foreign travel, and come to present himself before her Majesty, of whose goodness towards him he saith he cannot doubt.

Hereupon he and Mr Bedingfield departed this afternoon to London where the Earl, as I perceive, will spend only two days or less to make him some apparel meet for the court, although I would have had him forborne that new charge, considering his former apparel is very sufficient, and he not provided to increase a new charge.

But now considering my Lord is to come to Gloucester, there to make all humble means to recover her Majesty's favour, wherein he is to be helped with advice and friends, and that I cannot be so soon as he for that on Friday or Saturday next I am to attend at London for the celebration of the French King's funerals so as I am in doubt whether I shall come to Gloucester before Wednesday following, I must be bold by this my letter to require you in my name most humbly to beseech her Majesty that she will regard his loyalty and

not his lightness in sudden going over, his confidence in her goodness and clemency and not his boldness in attempting that which hath offended her, and finally so to order him both in the order and speed of his coming to her Majesty's presence that her Majesty's enemies and rebels which sought by many devices to stay him from returning may perceive his returning otherwise rewarded than they would have had him imagined, and that also his friends that have advised him to return may take comfort thereof with himself, and he not repent his dutifulness in doing that which in this time none hath done, I mean of such as hath either gone without licence, or gone with licence and not returned in their due time. Of his offence he hath examples overmany in going without licence, but of his dutifulness abroad, where he was provoked to the contrary, and of his returning again when he lacked not some stings of fear, he hath no examples at all to my remembrance.

And truly, not for himself only, but for to give some good examples to others that either have erred as he did or may hereafter err in like sort, I think it a sound counsel to be given to her Majesty that this young nobleman, being of such a quality as he is for birth, office and other notable valours of body and spirit, be not discomforted, either by any extraordinary delay or by any outward sharp or unkind reproof, but if her Majesty will not spare from uttering of some sparks of her first offence for his first, yet that the same may in presence of some few of her Council be uttered, and that her favourable accepting of his submission may be largely and manifestly declared to him to the confirmation of him in his singular loyalty.

Thus you see how busy I am, and surely not without some cause, for if he shall not find comfort now in this amendment of his first fault, I fear the malice of some discontented persons, wherewith the court is overmuch sprinkled, will colourably set to draw him to a repentance rather of his dutifulness in thus returning than to settle in him a contentation to continue in his duty.

And to conclude, sir, I beseech you to impart such parts of this my scribbling with my Lords of the Council with whom you shall perceive her Majesty will have to deal in this case, that not only they will favourably reprehend him for his fault, but frankly and liberally comfort him for his amends made both in his behaviour beyond seas and in his returning as he hath done, and beside this that they will be suitors to her Majesty for him as noblemen for a nobleman, and so bind him in honour to be indebted with goodwill to them hereafter, as indeed I know some of them hath given him good occasion, though he hath been otherwise seduced by such as regarded nothing his honour nor well doing, whereof I perceive he now acknowledgeth some experience to his charge, and I trust will be more ware of such sycophants and parasites.

You see I cannot well end, neither will I end without also praying you to remember Mr Hatton to continue my Lord's friend as he hath manifestly been and as my Lord confesseth to me that he hopeth assuredly so to prove him.

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And now I end. My Lord Keeper, Mr Sadler and I will be tomorrow at London, and on Friday speak with the Lord Mayor for their matters and for redress of some disorders about the city.

From my house at Theobalds this present Tuesday 3 August 1574.

You assured loving friend, W. Burghley

I pray you so to deal with my Lords that are to deal with my Lord of Oxford that this my letter to you may be as an intercession to them from me for my Lord, and I doubt not but Mr Secretary Smith will remember his old love towards the Earl when he was his scholar.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable Mr Secretary Walsingham, (2) 1574, From the Lord Treasurer dated the 3 of August, all touching the Earl of Oxford.