

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter written 31 May 1576 by Prince William of Orange to Lord Burghley concerning punishment of the Flushingers who had attacked Oxford's ship on his journey back to England.

Oxford had left Paris on or about 10 April 1576 (see TNA SP 70/138, ff. 29-31). As his ship crossed the Channel, it was attacked by pirates from Flushing, provoking reaction by the Privy Council and the sending of Robert Beale (1541-1601), Clerk of the Privy Council, to Flanders to meet with Prince William of Orange or the Governors of Flushing. The embassy met with little success. From the entry for Robert Beale in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online:

*Beale's clerkship, his involvement with the principal secretaryship, and his prior experience overseas made him an unusually good candidate for a variety of diplomatic activities. Between 16 April and 26 July 1576 he went to the Low Countries as special ambassador on £2 per day to protest at Dutch seizures of English shipping. He had an audience with William of Orange about 1 May and carried with him a scarcely veiled warning: if Dutch piracies did not cease, Elizabeth would consider joining Philip II in suppressing the rebellion there. The queen emphasized her displeasure by sending Sir William Winter to join with Beale, the former arriving with new threats and demands that the Dutch repay outstanding English loans. The failure of the two men to gain Dutch co-operation led for a time to something not far removed from war between England and the Low Countries.*

For a copy of the original letter available online, see the Historici.nl. website at <http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/WVO/brief/7926>.

A summary translation is given in the *Calendar of State Papers Foreign*, available online:

Was greatly displeased when he heard from Mr Robert Beale of the injuries which the Earl of Oxford had received at the hands of certain sea captains calling themselves Flushingers. Has taken such order that some of them are already in prison and if they are found guilty they shall be punished in such a manner that all who have been aggrieved by them will be contented and will see how unpleasing such actions are to the States.

The transcript below is taken from Lettenhove, Kervyn de, *Relations Politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre sous le Regne de Philippe II*, Vol. 8, (Brussels, F. Hayez, 1889), pp. 377-8, available online.

Monsieur, Il m'a grandement despleu d'entendre par le sieur Robert Beale l'injure et oultrage que Monsieur le Conte d'Oxford a puis nagaires recu par certain cappitayne de

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mer, se disant estre de ceulx de Flissingues. Et, ne vueillant aucunement tollérer telles insolences, j'y ay incontinent mis tel ordre que quelques-ungs en sont desjà prisonniers. Je ne faudray d'en faire ultérieurement prendre toute bonne et deue information, et, les trouvant coupables d'un faict si oultrageulx, je feray pourveoir à tout, de sorte que Monsieur le Conte d'Oxford, vous et tous ceulx qui s'en pourroyent sentir grevès, recepvront occasion de tout bon contentement et verront par effect combien les Estats de ce pays et moy sommes marris que telles indignités soyent commises contre auleun de la nation angloise, n'ayants de tout temps désiré que de faire tout plaisir, amitié et service aux moindres d'icelle. Et me recommandant sur ce bien affecteusement en vostre bonne grâce, je supplieray Dieu vous donner, Monsieur, bonne vie et longue. Escript à la Were, ce dernier jour de may, l'an 1576.