

SUMMARY: In this letter dated 27 July 1582, Sir Christopher Hatton advises Lord Chancellor Thomas Bromley that the Queen wishes to know his reason for refusing to accede to Thomas Knyvet's request that a commission be issued authorizing Knyvet's trial for the killing of Oxford's man in a fight to take place by a privy sessions in the vacation time. As well, the Queen wishes to know why Bromley has not acceded to Knyvet's request that Bromley redeliver bonds which Knyvet and his friends had posted with the court. The man killed by Thomas Knyvet was Robert Breninges (see Guildhall Library MS 4515). As Hatton's letter implies, a coroner's inquest had already found that Knyvet killed Breninges in self-defence. The transcript below is taken from Nicolas, Sir Harris, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), pp. 256-7.

MN: Mr Knyvet had slain a man of the Earl of Oxford's in fight. He was a suitor to the Lord Chancellor that his cause of *se defendendo* might be determined by a privy sessions in the vacation time, which at his bare request, being the party, my Lord thought not fit to grant him without farther commandment.

My very good Lord, Mr Knyvet hath informed her Majesty of his desire to have his cause of *se defendendo* determined by a privy sessions in this vacation time. It seemeth he hath found your Lordship not to like of that manner of proceeding, in which respect your Lordship hath refused to grant forth the commission. Her Majesty, in that she thinketh Mr Knyvet's request to stand in ordinary course, marvelleth not a little that your Lordship should deny her servant the same that is usual and that every other subject may ask. It hath pleased her, therefore, to command me to signify unto you that she looked for justice with favour at your hands towards this gentleman. 'You know', saith she, 'who he is and where he serveth, and therefore in a cause so little important as this you might have restrained the malice of his enemies well enough.' Haply, she thinketh, they would have his trial at Newgate amongst common thieves, or in the Bench in like sort, of purpose to make him suffer as much public reproach as they could lay on him. In this, without defrauding the law, her Highness supposeth and is persuaded he might be better dealt withal, and find ordinary favour without just offence of any. It may, therefore, please your good Lordship to return by your letters the cause that moved you to stay the commission, and what way you can best devise for the help of the gentleman, to her Majesty's better satisfaction. It is her pleasure to have your answer in these two points.

Mr Knyvet likewise requireth bonds which he with his friends, as it seemeth, have acknowledged before your Lordship of some very great sums; he is earnest to have them redelivered, and hath alleged his reasons to your Lordship therefore, wherein I have no doubt but you will deal with him according to your goodness. My good Lord, it is very necessary you take care to please th Queen in this case, for in truth she taketh it unkindly at your hands that she should be strained to meddle and be seen in this matter. At our

meeting I will tell you more of her Highness' conceit. And so God bless you forever.
And command my service, for it is due to your Lordship. Haste, this 27th of July 1582.

Your good Lordship's most bound poor friend,
Christopher Hatton