

SUMMARY: The letter below dated 30 December 1580 from Thomas Norton (1532-1584) to Sir Christopher Hatton (c.1540-1591) raises several issues which later appear in interrogatories directed to both Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel. Norton suggests that he has been able to identify the author of an allegedly treasonous book by his writing style, and that the identification can be confirmed by a Dr Hammond, (likely the Dr. John Hammond (1542-1589), who in 1581 took part, along with Norton, in the examination under torture of seminary priests in the Tower). Norton also alleges that the book's author has engaged in 'open disputations in defence of papistry' at Mistress Arundell's, and challenged a Mr Dalton to wagers on the subject, and that he may be the author of yet another treasonous book. Norton suggests that 'the gentleman in restraint' be examined. It has been conjectured that Norton's suspicions were directed at Lord Henry Howard. However it is unlikely that Norton would refer to a nobleman as a mere 'gentleman'. It seems more likely that Norton suspected Charles Arundel, who, according to a letter written by Mauvissiere to King Henri III of France on 11 January 1581, was in Hatton's custody at the time. However, questions about these issues were also incorporated into interrogatories for Lord Henry Howard. Harris suggests that the letters in BL Add. 15891 are copies made by Hatton's secretary, Samuel Cox. See Nicolas, Harris, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), pp. vi-v [sic], 161-2 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/memoirsoflifetim00nicouoft#page/n15>

and:

<https://archive.org/stream/memoirsoflifetim00nicouoft#page/160>

May it please your Honour, without all displeasent humour, and specially without the base disposition to afflict the afflicted, but only of true zeal to her Majesty's service, I am bold to inform you that long since I have seen a book written in French intituled *Le Innocence de la Tres Illustre Royne* etc., in the end whereof is a treatise touching the cause of the Duke of Norfolk written to the defamation of her Majesty and of his peers and of some special persons of her Highness' Council. This book is there pretended to be written in French by a stranger to England, and not by an Englishman, for speaking of England he saith 'vostre pais', & 'vostre Royne' and suchlike, and yet in truth it is written by an Englishman, as by Robin Goodfellow and Goodman Gose [=Goose?] and an overslipped title and otherwise, as I am able to prove. The whole course is very seditious and defamatory to her Majesty, her Council and nobility. He chargeth the Council with treason, and her Majesty with abandoning herself to be abused, to the disturbing of Christendom, to the maintenance of rebels, to the robbing of princes. It may be that your Honour will think it good to inquire the author, and not unfit to examine the gentleman now in restraint. This book is not only an Englishman's, but also originally written in English and translated into French. Mr Doctor Hammond is well acquainted with his style, if it please you to understand his opinion of it. Your Honour may also send for Mr. Dalton, and ask him whether the same party have not used, at Mrs.

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Arundell's, to maintain open disputations in defence of papistry, and challenged Mr Dalton and others in that case upon wagers. There goeth also underhand abroad an English treatise written wherein her Majesty's ancestress is termed base in contempt, the Queen is threatened with rebellion of nobility, some great persons are charged that under her Majesty's favour they have, as it were, tyrannized over the people. If the book be his, it is not good. Out of these books great matters of charge may be gathered to the author. It were pity he should be untruly burdened with them, but greater pity that he or any should carry such things clearly. And so I leave to trouble your Honour any longer. At London the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1580.

Your Honour's humbly,  
Thomas Norton