

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 12 November 1585 written from Calais by Thomas Doyley to Leicester describing the capture of the ship in which he was travelling to the Netherlands. The ship left England on 27 September 1585, and on 14 October was captured off Dunkirk by Spanish privateers. Doyley was carrying letters from Leicester, which he ‘drowned out of a porthole’ when the ship was boarded. However one of Oxford’s men was carrying a letter from Lord Burghley to Oxford, who was then in command of a company of horsemen in the Low Counties, and this provided a sufficient pretext for the Duke of Parma to decree that the ship contained ‘enemies’ goods’:

*We demanded if he had declared us enemies. They answered, No, but we were therefore put to our ransom because enemies’ goods were found in our ship, namely the Earl of Oxford’s, which they proved by letters of my Lord Treasurer’s to him wherein he wrote of her Majesty’s grant of the commanding of horsemen, which letter one of the Earl of Oxford’s chamber brought over in our boat with his money, apparel, wine & venison etc.*

Among those robbed and held to ransom were two of Oxford’s men surnamed Heigham and Terry, who were held prisoner until 1586. Oxford himself had been captured by pirates on his return to England in April 1576 from a continental tour.

Although, as the letter below indicates, Doyley was in Leicester’s service in 1585, Adams states that ‘In 1586 Doyley became a hostile critic of Leicester, possibly because he was related to both Sir John Norris and Richard Huddleston’. See Adams, Simon, ed., *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, Camden 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. 6, (Cambridge: Royal Historical Society, 1995), p. 331 at:

[https://books.google.ca/books?id=Ua9m6c488kcC&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=%22Thomas+Doyley%22+%22Earl+of+Leicester%22&source=bl&ots=0uaeKASHiC&sig=rrVbhquaAssjPi\\_NvCMGoVmjq8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi6-NLE1dfUAhVO8GMKHdioAKgQ6AEINjAG#v=onepage&q=%22Thomas%20Doyley%22%20%22Earl%20of%20Leicester%22&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?id=Ua9m6c488kcC&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=%22Thomas+Doyley%22+%22Earl+of+Leicester%22&source=bl&ots=0uaeKASHiC&sig=rrVbhquaAssjPi_NvCMGoVmjq8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi6-NLE1dfUAhVO8GMKHdioAKgQ6AEINjAG#v=onepage&q=%22Thomas%20Doyley%22%20%22Earl%20of%20Leicester%22&f=false)

### ***PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE LETTER***

For the writer of the letter, the physician and Spanish scholar, Thomas Doyley (1548-1603), see the *ODNB* entry and the *History of Parliament* entry for Thomas Doyley’s brother, Sir Robert Doyley (c.1542-1577) at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/doyley-robert-1542-77>.

See also the will of Sir Robert Doyley, TNA PROB 11/60/90, and the will of his wife, Elizabeth (nee Bacon) Doyley Neville Periam (d.1621), TNA PROB 11/148/110.

For Sir Stephen Lesieur [= 'Mr Stephens' in the letter below], see the *ODNB* entry.

For Oxford's servant, Thomas Whitehead, who it appears from the letter below had been taken prisoner earlier along with 'Mr Shelton' and 'two Tracys', see a letter from Stephen Lesieur to Sir Thomas Walsingham dated 12 March 1587:

'Elizabeth: March 1587, 11-20', in *Calendar of State Papers Foreign: Elizabeth, Volume 21, Part 2, June 1586-March 1587*, ed. Sophie Crawford Lomas and Allen B Hinds (London, 1927), pp. 401-417. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/foreign/vol21/no2/pp401-417> [accessed 25 June 2017].

*However it fall out, I must beseech you for more money, that I may not have to stay here for want of it. If I had not been forced to pay 230fl. for Captain Brackenbury ; 112fl. for Thomas Whithead, a gentleman of my lord of Oxford ; and 50fl. for one Robert Galeys, the fifty pounds your honour sent me of late would suffice.*

For the literary scholar, translator, and contributor to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Richard Stanihurst (1547–1618), see the *ODNB* entry.

*As the Harmonia appeared in print in London in 1570, Stanihurst was joined in his Dublin home by [Edmund] Campion. Together they researched the history of Ireland, having access to records in the collection of Richard's father. Before he left Ireland, Campion produced his 'Two bokes of the histories of Ireland' which he regarded as unfinished. Stanihurst took on the task of elaborating and refining his friend's work, and when Raphael Holinshed, seeking a contributor on Ireland for his major chroniculary undertaking, heard of the existing work, he invited Stanihurst's participation. The results are to be seen in the substantial sections on the history and description of Ireland and its inhabitants in Holinshed's Chronicles which, though based on the joint studies of the co-working scholars, are written in Stanihurst's flamboyant and eccentric prose. . . .*

By his first wife, Genet Barnewall (born c.1560, d. 26 August 1579), Stanihurst was the brother-in-law of Patrick Plunket, Lord Dunsany ['Lord Tunsan' in the letter below], to whom in 1582 Stanihurst dedicated *The First Four Books of Virgil's 'Aeneis' Translated into English Heroicall Verse*. As noted in the *ODNB*:

*While living in Dunkirk in the later 1580s, Stanihurst became integrated into the community of Roman Catholic exiles from England, and about 1586 married Helen (d. 1602), daughter of Sir Thomas Copley of Gatton in Surrey.*

As noted above, Stanihurst's second wife, Helen Copley (d.1602), was the daughter of the Catholic exile, Thomas Copley (1532–1584), for whom see his will, TNA PROB 11/68/160, and the *ODNB* entry:

*[Thomas Copley] was born between February and May 1532, eldest son of Sir Roger Copley (d. 1549), landowner and member of the Mercers' Company, and his second wife, Elizabeth (d. 1559/60), daughter of Sir William Shelley of Michelgrove, Sussex, judge of*

*common pleas. He was related to Elizabeth I by common descent from Thomas, last Lord Hoo and Hastings, and he was a kinsman of both William Cecil Lord Burghley and Francis Walsingham. . . .*

*[After 1570] Copley remained abroad, moving between the Low Countries, France, and Spain, until his death. During that time he frequently corresponded with the queen, Burghley, Walsingham, and others about his dilemma: although a devout Catholic he was a loyal subject whose unauthorized absence made him liable to statutory forfeiture of property for life. Necessity, he protested, obliged him to serve foreign princes. His integrity and loyalty, however, were widely doubted. 'A prime man among the English Fugitives' (Camden, 372), he was paid a Spanish pension, ennobled by Philip II as grand master of the Maes (Maze in Southwark) and lord of Gatton, made a baron and knight by the French king, and granted Spanish letters of marque against the Dutch rebels. Meanwhile the Howards benefited from his property and he received no income from it. He died on 25 September 1584 at the Spanish military camp near Antwerp. As his eldest son had died young he named his son William as his heir in his will (1576), and bequests were made to his daughters, Margaret, Helen, and Mary. In a codicil of 1577 provision was also made for his youngest sons, Anthony Copley and John Copley.*

According to Morris, the 'Mr Copley, surnamed Lord' mentioned in the letter below was Sir Thomas Copley's eldest surviving son and heir, William Copley (1565-1643). According to the *ODNB*, he married Magdalen Pickering (d.1610), and by her was the father of the Jesuit and colonist in North America, Thomas Copley (b.1594, d. in or after 1652).

See Morris, John, ed., *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, First Series, (London: Burns and Oates, 1872), p. 289 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=k489AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA289&lpg=PA289&dq=%22Thomas+Doyley%22+%22Earl+of+Leicester%22&source=bl&ots=SR9s4ECpVn&sig=13RqLC9BZMyaxhzNDF0nYGEqkKw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi6-NLE1dfUAhVO8GMKHdioAKgQ6AEIOTAH#v=onepage&q=%22Thomas%20Doyley%22%20%22Earl%20of%20Leicester%22&f=false>

*This 'Mr Copley, surnamed Lord,' was William Copley, called Lord Welles (supra, p. 510), whose sister Helen was Richard Stanihurst's second wife. By her he had two sons, who both entered the Society, Peter on Sept. 18, 1616, and William, Sept. 25, 1617. After the death of his wife, and by dispensation as he had been twice married, Richard Stanihurst became a Priest, and was made Chaplain to the Archdukes Albert and Isabella. He died at Brussels in 1618.*

It has been suggested that 'Mr Kemp, called Don Gulihelmo' mentioned in the letter below was the comedian, Will Kempe, later Shakespeare's fellow shareholder in the Globe, who is known to have been in Leicester's service at this time. See the Wikipedia article:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Kempe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Kempe)

*Kempe first enters the historical record as a performer with Leicester's Men at Leicester House in May 1585<sup>(4)</sup> and continued in this service after Leicester's departure for the Low Countries to take part in the Eighty Years' War. Leicester's nephew, Philip Sidney, sent letters home by way of a man he called "Will, my Lord of Lester's jesting player" and it is now generally accepted this was Kempe. Sidney complained in a letter to Francis Walsingham that "Will" had delivered the letters to Lady Leicester rather than Sidney's wife, Frances Walsingham. After a brief return to England, Kempe accompanied two other future Lord Chamberlain's Men, George Bryan and Thomas Pope, to Elsinore where he entertained Frederick II of Denmark.*

For Rowland Yorke (d.1588), see the *ODNB* entry.

The 'Prince of Parma' mentioned in the letter below was Alexander Farnese (27 August 1545 – 3 December 1592), Duke of Parma.

'St Aldegonde' mentioned in the letter below was the Flemish writer and statesman, Philip de Marnix (1540 – 15 December 1598).

For another transcript of the letter below, see Wright, Thomas, ed., *Queen Elizabeth and her Times*, Vol. II, (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), pp. 266-8 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=mWcNAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA267&lpg=PA267&dq=%22Dunkirk%22+%22Earl+of+Oxford%27s+men%22&source=bl&ots=iKTRh6IcGl&sig=LfB9VofVC0KKw8V1vbTPADeWGPw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi23eyxrdFUAhUJzGMKHTPTCpwQ6AEIjAA#v=onepage&q=%22Dunkirk%22%20%22Earl%20of%20Oxford%27s%20men%22&f=false>.

LM:

T. Doyley(?)

1585

12 November

Right honourable my singular good Lord, my humble duty premised, having by many difficulties rid myself out of the hands of the hellhounds of Dunkirk & arrived at Calais, where I may boldly write unto your Honour the unlucky event of our journey, these are to advertise your Honour that putting out from Gravelines the 13 of October, the 14 of the same we were taken not far from Dunkirk, our pilot sailing off his course, bending too much southward.

At the taking of us there were two men-of-war, the one called the Lour Haane, the other the Skeur Water, having two prizes in his company, our ship being heavy & full freighted, both the upper & nether deck, so that we could make no fight, so that we

yielded, & were rifled of all our goods & apparel unto our doublets & hose, with their daggers at our throats, & brought to the common jail, & after our being there an hour, came the under-bailiff & sergeant-mayor of the town with their poinards to our breasts, stripping us stark naked, searched us again, & took away such money as the mariners failed of.

There we remained from Thursday until Monday, having nothing said unto us. That day we were examined before the governor, the bailiff, burgomaster, pensioner and others of our own estate, of her Majesty's actions in Flanders, of your Honour's coming over etc.

This examination, signed with our hands, was two days after sent to the Prince of Parma to Antwerp, whose resolution we must attend. The same day fortnight he went, he returned. After four days consultation upon the Prince's letters, we were called to the town house, & there told by the bailiff that the Prince had declared our goods confiscate & our bodies to be set to ransom. We demanded if he had declared us enemies. They answered, No, but we were therefore put to our ransom because enemies' goods were found in our ship, namely the Earl of Oxford's, which they proved by letters of my Lord Treasurer's to him wherein he wrote of her Majesty's grant of the commanding of horsemen, which letter one of the Earl of Oxford's chamber brought over in our boat with his money, apparel, wine & venison etc. Then were we severally put to our ransom & rated at their pleasures, merchants, mariners, ship & all. My ransom with my charges in prison was 500 guilders, which by the means of Mr Hudson & Mr Beal, merchants, I discharged.

Mr Stephens was excepted from this putting to ransom because by the letters he had, they pretended him to be an agent of matters of estate, and an especial instrument in matters of Flushing, & set him down articles whereunto they commanded him to answer peremptorily upon pain of the torture, the copy whereof, with his answer to them, he hath sent to Mr Secretary. The answer to the articles is sent to the Prince, so that I doubt his will be a long and a difficult matter.

I escaped well because they found nothing in my chest but 4 physic & astronomy books. All letters & notes for your Honour's business I drowned out of a porthole when they entered the ship, which Mr Stephens by no means could do, his trunk being overwhelmed with sundry packs.

There came away in my company two merchants & your servant, John Potter, for whose ransom I have given my word. We left behind us some merchants, two of the Earl of Oxford's men, besides the four gentlemen which were there before us, namely Mr Shelton, two Tracys, & Mr Whitehead, for whom they now demand [CROSSED OUT: 4000] 2000 guilders apiece, & as yet grow no lower.

The day before our coming out of Dunkirk there arrived an English ship laden with corn and salt, a Sandwich man; his name is Richard Durrhum, the consideration whereof I refer to your Honour. There was one Burnham whose brother serveth Mr Secretary, an inhabitant of Dunkirk, banished the town upon suspicion of informations into England.

There remaineth in Dunkirk Mr Stanihurst, the Lord of Tunsan's brother, & Mr Copley, surnamed Lord, whose sister Mr Stanihurst married. Also Mr Kemp, called Don Gulihelmo.

The governor is a Spaniard named Francisco d'Aguillar d'Alvaredo(?). The garrison is two companies Spanish and one of Muffs [=German, Swiss], both weak. The Spaniards are notably hated of the inhabitants.

The town is very poor & desolate, the grass growing in the streets. If the Flushingers would hinder their fishing, they should be soon starved & brought to extremity.

The day before our coming away, they by proclamation called down the value of all coins to the rate of Brabant money, as I suppose to allure merchants to trade with them.

Mr Stephens humbly requesteth your Honour's assistance in the procuring his liberty. He hath wrote to Mr Rowland Yorke for his return, & to St Aldegonde to that effect, as he hath conferred with your Honour.

I know not what order your Honour hath taken touching your affairs since my imprisonment. I am ready as always to do your Honour any service if your Honour please to employ me. I request again your letters of credit, and from the Estates also. I hope to keep them better.

I mean, God willing, presently to take shipping for Flushing. We durst not go from Dunkirk to Ostend; the quarters being broken, no passport or drum would warrant us.

Thus humbly commending my dutiful service to your Honour, I wish the same felicity in all affairs. The 12 of November 1585 from Calais.

Your Honour's most affectioned and dutiful servant,

Thomas Doyley

Addressed: To the right honourable my very good Lord & master, the Earl of Leicester, give these

Endorsed: D.(?) Doyley, from Calais