

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 24 November 1569 from Oxford to Sir William Cecil written while Oxford was still a ward. In the letter Oxford refers to a recent illness, which may be the illness for which expenditures are recorded in Court of Wards accounts for the first quarter of 1570:

To Riche, the apothecary, for potions, pills and other drugs for my Lord's diet in time of his sickness, as by his bill it particularly appeareth, £15 15s 4d.

[To Chester Herald] for certain acates [=purchased provisions] for my Lord during his being sick at Windsor, for rewards to his physician and others. . .

See TNA SP 15/59/38, ff. 89-90.

Alternatively, Oxford may have been ill twice, i.e. in the late fall of 1569, and again in the first quarter of 1570.

Oxford refers as well as to Cecil's recent displeasure with him. The cause of Cecil's displeasure is not stated. It may be that Oxford had tacitly supported Norfolk's bid to remove Cecil from power in February 1569.

Alternatively, it may be that the advice Oxford had given his first cousin, Thomas Howard (1538-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk, at Titchfield had come to Cecil's ears. On 6 September, during the Queen's progress, Leicester was either genuinely ill or feigned a convenient illness while the court was at Titchfield. When the Queen came to his bedside, he revealed Norfolk's plan to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, whereupon the Queen summoned the Duke, and as he later wrote in his confession:

. . . did charge me on my allegiance to deal no further in the Scottish cause. After which time everybody began to be afraid to keep me company, insomuch as where before the lords' board was ever replenished as full of gentlemen as could sit at it, now if I could get three or four to dine with me it was all. Besides her Majesty's sharp speeches and grievous looks did so kill my heart as I could not tell what to do, and when I came to my Lord of Leicester thinking to find some comfort there, I found him very cold; whereupon I determined to withdraw myself.

See Colthorpe, Marion E., 'The Elizabethan Court Day By Day' for the year 1569, p. 29 at:

https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/The_Elizabethan_Court_Day_by_Day

Undoubtedly Oxford was one of those who continued to dine with Norfolk. Moreover while they were at Titchfield he advised the Duke to take up arms to save himself. Charles Arundel later alleged that Oxford railed at Norfolk after his execution, saying that:

My Lord of Norfolk [was] worthy to lose his head for not following his counsel at Titchfield to take arms.

See TNA SP 12/151/46, ff. 103-4.

Norfolk went to Kenninghall, but later complied with the Queen's summons to present himself at court, and was arrested on 3 October 1569 at Burnham.

In the letter Oxford requests Cecil's assistance in obtaining licence 'to be employed . . . in this service that now is in hand', that is, the suppression of the Northern Rebellion which began in early November 1569 and was over by mid-December of that year.

For the warrant dated 30 March 1570 giving Oxford permission to join Thomas Radcliffe (1526/7-1583), 3rd Earl of Sussex, in a later mission to suppress disorder on the northern border of England, see TNA SP 15/19/37, f. 88.

Sir. Although my hap hath been so hard that it hath visited me of late with sickness, yet thanks be to God, through the looking to which I have had by your care had over me, I find my health restored and myself double beholding unto you, both for that and many good turns which I have received before of your part, for the which, although I have found you to not account of late of me as in time tofore, yet notwithstanding that strangeness, you shall see at last in me that I will acknowledge and not be ungrateful unto you for them, and not to deserve so ill a thought in you that they were ill bestowed in me, but at this present desiring you, if I have done anything amiss that I have merited your offence, impute to my young years and lack of experience to know my friends.

And at this time I am bold to desire your favour and friendship, that you will suffer me to be employed by your means and help in this service that now is in hand, whereby I shall think myself the most bound unto you of any man in this court, and hereafter ye shall command me as any of your own.

Having no other means whereby to speak with you myself, I am bold to impart my mind in paper, earnestly desiring your Lordship that, at this instant, as heretofore you have given me your good word to have me see the wars and services in strange and foreign places, sith you could not then obtain me licence of the Queen's Majesty, now you will do me so much honour as that, by your purchase of my licence, I may be called to the service of my prince and country, as at this present troublous time a number are.

Thus leaving to importunate you with my earnest suit, I commit you to the hands of the Almighty.

By your assured friend this 24th of November,

Edward Oxenford

Addressed: To the right honourable and his singular good friend, Sir William Cecil, Secretary and Master of the Wards, give these.

Endorsed: 24 November 1569, th' Earl of Oxford to my master. [*In another later(?) hand*: Desires him to procure leave from the Queen for him to go & serve her & his country in the wars.]