

SUMMARY: In this letter from July 1582, Oxford's servant, John Lyly, advises Lord Burghley that Oxford is displeased with him, and asks for a hearing from Burghley, a course of action which supports the inference that there was a family connection between Burghley and Lyly, and that Burghley had originally recommended Lyly to Oxford's service. Lyly is confident that he will be cleared, and attributes Oxford's displeasure with him to treachery and factionalism on the part of Oxford's other servants. The copy of the letter printed below is taken from Bond, R. Warwick, *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, 3 vols Oxford University Press, 1973, i, pp.28-9 and Feuillerat, Albert, *John Lyly*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, pp.529-31.

MY DUTY, right Honourable, in most humble manner remembered.

It hath pleased my Lord, upon what colour I cannot tell, certain I am upon no cause, to be displeased with me, the grief whereof is more than the loss can be. But seeing I am to live in the world, I must also be judged by the world, for that an honest servant must be such as Caesar would have his wife, not only free from sin but from suspicion. And for that I wish nothing more than to commit all my ways to your wisdom, and the devices of others to your judgment, I here yield both myself and my soul, the one to be tried by your Honour, the other by the justice of God, and I doubt not but my dealings being sifted, the world shall find white meal where others thought to show coarse bran. It may be many things will be objected, but that anything can be proved, I doubt. I know your Lordship will soon smell devices from simplicity, truth from treachery, factions from just service. And God is my witness, before whom I speak and before whom for my speech I shall answer, that all my thoughts concerning my Lord have been ever reverent, and almost religious. How I have dealt, God knoweth, and my Lady can conjecture, so faithfully as I am as unspotted for dishonesty as a suckling from theft. This conscience of mine maketh me presume to stand to all trials, either of accounts or counsel; in the one I never used falsehood, nor in the other dissembling. My most humble suit therefore unto your Lordship is that my accusations be not smothered, and I choked in the smoke, but that they may be tried in the fire, and I will stand to the heat. And my only comfort is that he that is is [sic] wise shall judge truth, whose nakedness shall manifest her nobleness. But I will not trouble your honourable ears with so many idle words, only this upon my knees I ask, that your Lordship will vouchsafe to talk with me, and in all things will I show myself so honest that my disgrace shall bring to your Lordship as great marvel as it hath done to me grief, and so thoroughly will I satisfy every objection that your Lordship shall think me faithful, though infortunate. That your Honour rest persuaded of mine honest mind, and my Lady of my true service, that all things may be tried to the uttermost, is my desire, and the only reward I crave for my just (aye, just I dare term it) service. And thus in all humility submitting my cause to your wisdom and my conscience to the trial, I commit your Lordship to the Almighty.

Your Lordship's most dutifully to command,
John Lyly.

For that I am for some few days going into the country, if your Lordship be not at leisure to admit me to your speech, at my return I will give my most dutiful attendance, at which time it may be my honesty may join with your Lordship's wisdom, and both prevent that neither would allow. In the mean season, what colour soever be alleged, if I be not honest to my Lord, and so mean to be during his pleasure, I desire but your Lordship's secret opinion, for as I know my Lord to be most honourable, so I beseech God in time he be not abused. Loath I am to be a prophet, and to be a witch I loathe.

Most dutiful to command,
John Lyly.

Addressed: To the Right Honourable, the Lord Burghley, Lord High Treasurer of England.

Endorsed: Julij 1582. Iohn Lilly to my Lord.