

SUMMARY: The document below, dated 25 April 1576, contains an account by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, of the circumstances of Oxford's return to England from his continental tour. It is clear from other documents that prior to his return Oxford had received information which led him to believe that Elizabeth de Vere (1575-1627), born on 2 July 1575 while Oxford was out of the county, was not his child. It seems likely that this information came from his first cousin, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614). Thus, instead of accepting Lord Burghley's offer to come to Cecil House, Oxford retired to his own lodging, and while refusing to allow his wife, Anne Cecil (1556-1588), to come to him, met with his sister, Mary de Vere (d.1624), his cousin, Lord Henry Howard, and Edward and Rowland York (d.1588), two of the eleven sons of Sir John York (d.1569). Oxford's receiver, mentioned in Lord Burghley's account, was likely Edward Hubbard (d.1602).

Assurance of a jointure. Not so much as his thirds.

£3000 given with her, beside half as much otherwise expended.

Assurance of a portion. No more than she hath necessarily spent, for she was in debt for lack of relief. She had been long sick before that. In her sickness when she bred child, her charges were great. The like when she was delivered. With that she hath, my Lord is discharged of meat and drink for herself, her women and her servants, and for all manner of wages and liveries. She also beareth the charges of a gentlewoman, a nurse, a rocker and a launder for her child.

LM: Nota: No land assured to his daughter, though he have no other child.

No unkindness known on his part at his departure. She made him privy that she thought she was with child, whereof he said he was glad. When he was certified thereof to Paris, he sent her his picture with kind letters and messages. He sent her 2 coach-horses.

When he heard she was delivered, he gave me thanks by his letters for advertising thereof.

He never signified any misliking of anything until the 4 of April at Paris from whence he wrote somewhat that, by reason of a man of his which was his receiver in abusing him and me he had conceived some unkindness, but he prayed me to let pass the same for it did grow by the doubleness of servants.

I wrote to Paris to him to hasten him homeward.

I sent for my son, Thomas Cecil, who was more than [+a] hundred miles from London to come in post to go and meet him at Dover, or in France, who came, and was with him at Dover within 2 hours after my Lord Howard and others, and thither carried my commendations & his wife's, and did not understand from him any point of misliking.

My daughter went to Gravesend sooner than I would, for my advice was that by my son she should understand his contentation, but she thought long for my son's answer, and looked that my Lord would be come [ ] before she could have word, and so went with my Lady Mary, who had written to her to Theobalds, requesting that she might go with her.

All this while I knew of no misliking towards me or his wife, but I heard that his receiver had been at Dover to speak with him, and he refused it, saying he would speak with him before me.

I sent letters to him to entreat him to take my house for his lodging, whereof I had no answer, and yet I wrote twice by 2 several messengers, but my son sent me word that he found him disposed to keep himself secretly 2 or 3 days in his own lodging, and yet that Edward York told him secretly that his Lordship would come first to my house, but he would nobody knew thereof, whereupon I was very glad, but his wife gladder, and the contrary I knew until he was landed, and then my son told me how he did suddenly leave the barge and took a wherry and only with Rowland York landed about York House.

Hereupon I sent to welcome him, and with request to take a lodging in my house, but thereto he answered that he meant to keep himself secret there in his lodging 2 or 3 days, and then he would come and speak with me, and the messenger did come from his wife with request that if he should not come that night to her father's house that then she would come to him, for she desired to be one of the first that might see him. To that he answered neither yea nor nay, but said, "Why, I have answered you," meaning that he would keep himself secret 2 or 3 days, as the messenger took it, whereupon I thought convenient she should forbear to go to him until we might see how others were suffered to come to him, or he to resort to others.

Within 2 hours I heard by them that had been with him how many had been with him without any his misliking, and also that it was heard that he meant to sup out of his lodging at Edward York's, and that there was a coach preparing for my Lady, his sister, to come to him, which being heard by my daughter, she very importunately required me she might go to him, and yet I required her to stay until I might send to my Lord Howard, from whom I would know whether he knew that my Lord, her husband, would go to the court, for if he would, she should not go until he had been there. My Lord Howard sent me word that he as yet could not tell, but when he should know he would send me word, whereof I had none.

And then hearing that my Lord Howard was at the Earl's lodging, and supper provided at York's, and my Lady Mary coming from the court . . .