

SUMMARY: In this letter to Sir Robert Cecil written in June 1599, Oxford reprises the circumstances set out in his letter to the Queen written a few days earlier (CP 71/26). He adds an additional circumstance which occurred after he had sent his letter to the Queen, namely that he had received a letter from Sir John Fortescue saying that he and the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edmund Anderson, had been appointed by the Queen to meet with Oxford. However on the day of the meeting Sir John Fortescue pled illness, while Sir Edmund Anderson begged off on the ground that he could not come alone without knowing the Queen's further pleasure. By the time of the writing of this letter to Sir Robert Cecil, Oxford was fully aware that Sir Edmund Anderson had not reported to the Queen Oxford's earlier message to him that the merchants had their money in readiness.

I am not at this present to use any superfluous circumstances, wherefore I hope you will conceive never the worse, and bear with the haste of my matter.

Her Majesty hath of late by Sir John Fortescue and my Lord Chief Justice employed my service for the getting her of money wherewith to supply a stock to buy the tin yearly in Cornwall and Devonshire.

I found out sufficient and of the most able merchants, willing and ready with their money to lend it to supply her Majesty without any penny of interest, to pay her this present year ten thousand pound, every half year, to wit, five thousand pound.

I advertised the Lord Chief Justice.

Sithence I have heard nothing till Thursday last, when overnight I received from Sir John Fortescue a letter that at three of the clock in the afternoon next day they were appointed by her Majesty to be with me about this matter of the tin; at noontime, I had a messenger from Sir John Fortescue that he had not found himself that morning well, and therefore he would next day be at the same hour with me, which was Friday, that is, yesterday. I attended till six, expecting their coming. I saw they came not. I marvelled, and sent a man both to Sir John Fortescue to know how he did, and to my Lord Chief Justice, that if it were any matter concerning her Majesty's service if there were any let that they could not come, that they would signify the matter by letter. Sir John was sick, and this day sent me word he takes physic.

My Lord Chief Justice, for that he was joined to come with Sir John Fortescue, will know her Majesty's pleasure further tomorrow at the court.

In the mean season, I find they have reported nothing of the matter as they resolved to do when they were with me; they have not advertised her Majesty that the money was to be had but, contrary rather (if it be true that I do hear), that her Majesty hath no money in her coffers for this purpose. To what end is that, when she hath it ready-prepared by her merchants? Why should it be told her what she wanted in her coffers, and not what her

Majesty might have, without any interest, and the gain of seven thousand pound, from her merchants, and hereafter a matter of fifteen thousand pound a year, proved as clear as the sun doth shine? For the quantity of tin being supposed ten hundred thousand pound, and that her Majesty shall buy it for four marks the hundred (that is, £26 and a mark the thousand), who doth not see that, selling the same for £4 4s a hundred (that is, two and forty pound a thousand weight of tin), that her Majesty gains fifteen thousand pound a year, and thus the merchants to buy it of the Queen have agreed with me.

Now it moves me not a little that I should be thus set a-work for her Majesty's service, and when with my great labour I have effected it, to be thus mocked. If they meant it at the first to overthrow it, why should they abuse me in her Majesty's name to deal with the merchants, and when I have done it, neither to let her Majesty understand it (putting them in trust and sending them of purpose to assist me), but contrary, by their silence, to neglect the time and with impertinent matters of her Majesty's want of money in her coffers to hide from her the readiness of the merchants to furnish this service?

I have wrote to her Majesty, hoping she will not suffer me, employing myself in her service, to be rewarded for my labour with a mock, nor herself to be thus abused to have a matter of seven thousand pound this year, with a more assured profit in the years following, by negligence, dullness or abuse (for one of these it must be) to be overseen and lost, especially putting her Majesty to no further cost or travail than to the telling it into her Exchequer.

My desire therefore unto you is this, that you will be acknown to her Majesty that I have made you privy that I have written unto her, and for that I fear in time enough my letter should not be read & that my hand is too troublesome for her Majesty, that I had desired you to move her Majesty for answer thereof, whereby it may be she will make you read the letter, and then she shall not be ignorant how her service is conveyed.

And forsomuch as I find so many that her Majesty hath put in trust in this cause, yet when it comes to the point they give her the slip, I would most earnestly desire you for our old acquaintance, friendship and affinity['s] sake to join with me in this service and to offer your help to me in this matter to her Majesty, for I do assure you that it will have an acceptable end to her Majesty, and that counsellor shall have no small advantage over the other which have (I cannot tell what to term it) so slowly and dully or corruptly abused, from time to time, her Majesty's intentions touching this matter.

And thus much I assure you, to encourage you the more, that let her Majesty call back this countermand which stoppeth the pre-emption, and let it be declared as it was of her Majesty's resolution to take it into her hands, and the money shall be presently supplied by the merchants, and her Majesty shall have cause to give you thanks and I shall be glad my travail shall not be lost. Thus, with my earnest desire to you to consider the cause according to the haste and not according to the disordered disposition of my letter, I will end and take my leave, for if her Majesty doth not presently countermand this last resolution procured from her by concealing the merchants' readiness to furnish her with money, she is like to leese the benefit of this year and, hereafter the whole cause.

One thing I also am to remember, that is, where I have named Alderman Bayning to her Majesty, who hath been very prompt and forward to bring on the rest of his companions to this service, for some cause to desire her Majesty not to let his name to be seen or known, for some respects, in her Majesty's service. I wrote of him only that her Majesty might both know his diligence, and that for my dealing with the merchants he might witness hereafter how far everything was proceeded in before this unlooked for countermand.

Your assured friend and loving brother,
Edward Oxeford

Addressed: To the right honourable and his very well beloved friend, Sir Robert Cecil, her Majesty's Principal Secretary and Master of her Wards

Endorsed:
June 1599
Earl of Oxford to my Master
concerning tin