

SUMMARY: In this letter to the Queen written in June 1599, Oxford says that, the Queen having decided after a long period of inaction to proceed with the pre-emption of tin, and having the previous day sent Sir John Fortescue and the Chief Justice, Sir Edmund Anderson, to request that Oxford provide the money he had promised for that purpose, he required a day or two to contact the merchants who were to provide it. Having contacted the merchants through Alderman Paul Bayning, Oxford found them ready to proceed, and advised Sir Edmund Anderson of that fact and of the merchants' terms and conditions, chief among which was that the merchants would lend the Queen without interest the stock of money to purchase the tin, and would pay her £5000 every six months. Oxford heard nothing in reply, and his wife, coming from the court, said that the Queen had told her she had heard that Oxford had not gotten the money. Then, on the Wednesday previous to Oxford's letter, when the merchants were to meet together to collect the money, a command came to them from the Lord Mayor, Nicholas Moseley, to 'no further think of that matter', for the Queen had no money, and would not exercise the pre-emption that year. Moreover, Oxford had heard nothing further from Sir John Fortescue or Sir Edmund Anderson. Oxford says he is much grieved to be 'thus flouted, scorned, & mocked', and assures the Queen that the merchants are still ready to provide the money if she wishes to exercise the pre-emption.

I beseech your Majesty to pardon mine importunity at this present, and once again in this cause to trouble you with my letters. Also, for my short writing, sith I rather am now in so short a time to possess you with the matter than with the circumstance.

There were with me a few days past, sent from your Majesty, Sir John Fortescue & my Lord Chief Justice about the matter of tin, who declared to me that your Majesty was resolved to take into your hands the pre-emption of tin, and that it was your pleasure I should proceed in that which I had advertised your Majesty, to get you the money with which the tin might be bought of the country.

I declared to them that I had in readiness merchants very sufficient which were willing and ready to lend their money, but for that I had not of long heard from your Majesty I feared lest you had forgotten it or, at the least, not determined to proceed any further by some persuasion, wherefore I had neglected this time to entertain the merchants in the same humour. I therefore desired a day or two again to refresh it again with them, whereto they agreed.

I did so. I found the merchants steadfast in their mind, willing, and with great alacrity forward to do your Majesty's service in this. Alderman Bayning was the messenger between them and me. He did their message, I received, we parted; then after (for that I could not travel up and down myself), I made Alderman Bayning once again to reiterate their resolution as repeated from me, to know whether I mistook any word or speech. They all sent me word back again that I rightly conceived them, and I mistook them in no one point or word.

Hereupon I advertised my Lord Chief Justice, in which advertisement I sent their requests and conditions, concerning which I referred some to his opinion, and required to hear from him.

These conditions and such matters at this time, for brevity's sake, I am to refer to a fitter time hereafter to inform your Majesty; only this I am here to let you understand, that the merchants were willing and in readiness with their money to have lent you the money which should be a stock for the whole commodity. Your Majesty should not lay out one penny, you shall pay no interest, every six months they would have paid you five thousand pound, which is ten thousand pound a year. They would take no years, but when they had done your Majesty this service and that you had proof of the same, and that they had restored the ancient price in Turkey of this commodity, then to accepted [sic] such conditions as your Majesty should think most profitable for yourself.

These things I advertised, time ran on, the merchants were moved, I wondered. And, to make me more wonder, my wife, coming from the court, told me that your Majesty said to her you heard not that there was any money gotten.

On Wednesday last, the merchants were resolved to meet together for the collection of the money and to portion every man's part with great willingness and forwardness, but then (strange to me to hear it) a commandment delivered from the Lord Mayor that they should no further think of that matter, for her Majesty had no money, and therefore was determined this year to let it alone, and they might buy as they had done before.

How your Majesty is persuaded I am not privy but, by your Majesty's favour, I muse what eloquence should move you to leave seven thousand, gained so easily that you are put to no further cost than telling it in your Exchequer.

Again, I think myself very evil recompensed for my service, to be employed and, when I have performed it with all the faith and diligence I can, then it and myself upon no reason, with so great a loss to your Majesty, to be rejected and neglected.

I dare not say how much your Majesty is abused, but I find myself much grieved to be set on to compass this money and, having compassed it, to be turned out with such a mockery. I beseech your Majesty, in whose service I have faithfully employed myself, I will not entreat that you suffer it yourself thus to be abused but that you will not suffer me thus to be flouted, scorned, & mocked.

I fear I am too long, and that my hand is too troublesome to read; further, the letter too long, wherefore I will end, adding this only, that to inform your Majesty that you were to lay out any one penny is a foul abuse, and this, on my credit and duty, I do affirm to your Majesty, in whomsoever the fault is so far to abuse themselves. How can it be said you have no money when, behold, so sufficient merchants are ready, without any interest, to lend you the money?

Perhaps they have told you that they have heard none named, or know of any. How can Sir John Fortescue say so, how can my Lord Chief Justice say it, when I did assure them I had gotten merchants and the money to be ready whensoever they should give me warning to bring forth these merchants with their money?

They may say they had none named to them. They know that I told them the merchants desired not to be seen in it till your Majesty had taken the pre-emption. They mislike [sic?] it not; they told me that that order for the pre-emption should be done within two or three days. I never heard sithence from them. I prepared the merchants to be ready, till now this new alteration hath confounded all.

Wherefore, if your Majesty will have it done, I am to advertise you it will be done. Money is to be had that shall stand you in never a penny. And therefore, if it stand with your pleasure, it behoveth your Majesty to make a stay again of this new deceit and to suffer the former order of pre-emption to go forward which, in a year or two, will be fifteen thousand pound a year.

Thus in haste I crave your Majesty's pardon, for I thought it better for me to make a fault in my writing than that your Majesty should suffer any loss by so great abuse, and to inform your Majesty how necessessary [sic] it it [sic] is (if your pleasure be not to leese a commodity made so ready to your hands) to countermand this last order, and to give commandment that the order of your pre-emption be not altered lest the merchants, having prepared this money and being provided to furnish your service, disposing it otherwise and upon some other employments, the like facility and opportunity to effect it be never had again.

Your Majesty's most humble subject and servant,
Edward Oxenford

Addressed: For her most excellent Majesty

Endorsed: June 1599, Earl of Oxford to her Majesty concerning tin