

SUMMARY: The letter below was written to King Charles IX of France (1550-1574) on 8 May 1571 by the French ambassador to England, Bertrand de Salignac Fenelon, seigneur de la Mothe (1523-1589). It begins with a description of the tournament held on 1-3 May 1571 at Westminster in which Oxford was one of four challengers against twenty-seven defenders. Fenelon gives few details of the tournament itself. It is described more fully in Segar, William, *The Book of Honor and Armes* (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975) pp. 94-5:

*A royal challenge was also there [=Westminster] proclaimed before her Majesty wherein were challengers the Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee and Christopher Hatton. The defenders were the Lord Stafford, the Lord Henry Seymour, Edward Herbert, Sir George Carey, Thomas Cecil, Henry Grey, William Howard, Sir Jerome Bowes, Henry Knollys, Henry Knyvet, William Norris, Richard Bulkeley, Thomas Knyvet, William Knollys, Ralph Lane, George Delves, Robert Colsell, Lancelot Bostock, Brian Anslay, Henry Mackwilliam, Thomas Bedingfield, Thomas More, William Worthington, Richard Blount, Thomas Coningsby, Robert Alexander, Roger Clopton. This triumph continued three days, the first at tilt, the second at tourney, and the third at the barriers. On every of the challengers her Majesty bestowed a prize, for the receiving whereof they were particularly led armed by two ladies unto her presence chamber. The prize at the tilt on the defenders' party was given unto Henry Grey, at the tourney unto the Lord Henry Seymour, at the barriers unto Thomas Cecil. Before them went Clarenceux King of Arms in his rich coat of arms. This magnificent combat was performed anno 1571.*

The Admiral referred to by Fenelon is Edward Fiennes de Clinton (1512-1585), later 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lincoln. The Sieur de Sabran whom Fenelon says saw the first day of the tournament was a frequent messenger between Charles IX and Fenelon at this time. The letter is found in *Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac, de la Mothe Fenelon, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre de 1568 a 1575*, 7 vols (Paris and London, 1838-40) at iv, pp. 88-92.

CLXXVIIe DEPESCHE  
du viiie jour de may 1571

(Envoyée exprès jusques à Calais par Jehan Volet.)

Tournoi à Londres. -- Opposition de la chambre des lords aux projets de la chambre des communes. -- Nouvelle crainte des Anglais d'une entreprise sur l'Irlande. -- Leurs plaintes contre les armemens faits en Bretagne. -- Offre de lord Burleigh de reprendre la négociation du traité d'Ecosse. -- Emportement d'Elisabeth contre Marie Stuart. -- Nouvelles d'Ecosse, de la Rochelle et de Flandre.

AU ROY

Sire, je commenceray ceste cy par dire à Vostre Majesté qu'après le partement du Sr de Sabran, lequel luy aura peu compter ce qu'il a veu des joustes de la première journée de tournoy, entrepris en ceste court au commencement de may, j'ay esté prié d'assister encores aulx deux suyvantes, ès quelles a esté, à la seconde, combattu à la barrière; et a vollu la Royne d'Angleterre que je l'aye accompagnée à toutes trois, non sans faire plusieurs honorables mencions de semblables exercisses de Vostre Majesté et des triumphes de vostre royaulme, ny sans qu'elle ayt monstré de prandre ung singulier playsir à cest essay des siens, lesquelz toutesfoys elle n'a que modestement louez: qu'ilz faisoient assés bien pour Angleterre, et qu'ilz aprenoient icy comme ilz pourroient comparoir ailleurs parmy les aultres. Je luy ay loué leur bien faire et que c'estoit de prou d'endroitz d'ailleurs qu'on pouvoit venir icy pour aprendre, comme, à la vérité, il y a heu en ces combats de la magnificence et un fort bon ordre et assés d'adresse de ceulx qui s'esprouvoient. Le comte d'Oxford (p.89) avoit dressé la partie, lequel, avec sire Charles Havart, sire Henry Lay, et Me Haton, ont esté quatre tenans contre aultres vingt sept gentishommes, de bonne mayson, assaillans; et les juges du tournoy ont esté les comtes d'Orcester et de Suxès, l'admiral, et milord Sidney, et n'y est advenu nul inconvenient. Il a esté mandé a l'ambassadeur d'Espagne, s'il avoit desir de veoir ces triumphes, qu'on luy prépareroit une fenêtre; mais il a respondu qu'à ung ambassadeur d'ung si grand roy apartenoit, devant qu'il allast en nulle part, de sçavoir quel lieu il y devoit tenir, et ne s'y est point trouvé.

[snip]

Ce viije jour de may 1571.

Sire, I will begin this by saying to your Majesty that, after the departure of the Sieur de Sabran, who shall have been able to account for himself [=give his account of] that which he saw of the jousts of the first day of the tourney undertaken in this court at the beginning of May, I was again invited to be present at the two following, which was on the second [+day of the two], fought at the barriers, and the Queen of England wished that I accompany her to all three, not without making many honourable mentions of similar exercises of your Majesty and of the triumphs of your realm, nor without showing that she took a singular pleasure in this attempt of her own [+jousters], whom she always but modestly praised, [+saying] that they were doing well enough for England, and that they were learning here how they might appear [=compare] elsewhere among others. I praised their well-doing to her, and [+said] that it was of profit to places elsewhere that they could come here to learn, as truly there has been, in these combats, magnificence of a very high order, and sufficient skill of those who put themselves to the test [=adventured themselves]. The Earl of Oxford had set up the combat, who, with Sir Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee, and Master Hatton, were four maintaining [=defending] against other twenty-seven gentlemen of good houses, assailing [=challenging], and the judges of the tourney were the Earls of Worcester and Sussex, the Admiral, and my Lord Sidney, and there has occurred nothing inconvenient [=no accident has occurred]. Word

---

was sent to the ambassador of Spain, if he had a desire to see these triumphs, that a window would be prepared for him, but he answered that to an ambassador of so great a king it belonged, before he might in any way go, to know which place he must occupy, and he was not there at all.

[snip]

The 8<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1571.