

SUMMARY: The extract below is from a letter dated 8 November 1586 (29 October 1586 Old Style) written by Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604) to King Philip II. Mendoza's principal concern is with the dangerous situation of Mary, Queen of Scots, as a result of the Babington plot. The Babington conspirators were apprehended in early August 1568, and executed on 20 and 21 September. Mary was tried at Fotheringay on 14 and 15 October, although it is unclear whether Mendoza had as yet learned of the trial. Mendoza indicates that he can personally do nothing to help Mary, but that he has requested the papal nuncio, Fabio Mirto Frangipani, Archbishop of Nazareth, to point out to King Henri III that if Mary were to be executed, Philip II would be the legitimate heir to the throne of England, a prospect which Mendoza felt would motivate Henri III to do what he could to keep Mary alive. In an attempt to influence the French court against Mary, Queen Elizabeth had sent Sir Edward Wotton (1548-1628) as special ambassador to Paris to present Henri III with copies of the evidence for Mary's complicity in the Babington plot (see entry for Sir Edward Wotton, whom Mendoza mistakenly identifies as 'Henry Wotton', in *The Dictionary of National Biography*). Mendoza says that he had been informed by the Scottish ambassador that the English ambassador, Sir Edward Stafford (1552-1605), had indicated that he would use Charles Arundel as an intermediary to let the Scottish ambassador know whatever he needed to know in order to act on Mary's behalf. Moreover, Mendoza says that on Sir Edward Wotton's arrival in Paris, Stafford had learned from Wotton the precise nature of the charges against Mary, and had informed Arundel of them so that the information could be conveyed to King Henri III in advance of Wotton's audience with him. Mendoza says further that Stafford has given Arundel information about Drake and Hawkins, and that he himself is 'trying to get Arundel more into Stafford's intimacy in order that he may get fuller information on this and other points'. For further details of Stafford's activities as a spy for Spain, and of Charles Arundel's involvement with Stafford, see K.1564.79. For the roles played by Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard in events involving Oxford in 1580/1 see TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2 and other documents on this website, in particular the letters of the Spanish ambassador to England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604). The translation below is taken from Hume, Martin, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs*, Vol. III, 1580-1586, pp. 646-8.

The Archbishop of Nazareth has been informed by me of what your Majesty orders me, and he humbly thanks you for this sign of your favour. He says that the interests of God and those of your Majesty are so interwoven that he could hardly neglect the latter without forgetting the former, which his dignity as a minister of His Holiness, an honest man, and a subject of your Majesty will never allow him to do, His obligation towards your Majesty is not lost sight of, and he is ready to fulfil it to the fullest extent. He is as steadfast as I have reported him to be, whenever your Majesty's interests demand, and in the matter of the exclusion of Bearn he is harder than a diamond. He has told me several times that before his departure from Rome he spoke to His Holiness about it, and the Cardinal inquisitors assured him that on no account would the bulls against the Princes of

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Bearn and Conde be altered. I keep in close communication with him, as your Majesty orders, and I recognize how sincerely and truthfully he opens his heart to me.

The Queen of England is keeping the Queen of Scotland very strictly, as your Majesty will see by my other despatch herewith. Although the general idea amongst the common people is that her life will be in danger, this is in all probability not to be feared, because the reasons which have hitherto led the English Councillors to spare her militate more strongly in her favour now than ever. To these may be added the certainty that, even if the Queen wished to wreak her vengeance upon her, the Councillors would not allow it to be done in view of the injury it would bring upon them individually and collectively, as it would at once set the country aflame with a long civil war which the various pretenders would foment, and enable your Majesty, who is the next legitimate heir after the Queen of Scotland (her son not being a Catholic), to conquer the country with ease in its divided condition, whilst the Catholics would undoubtedly follow the party of your Majesty. The forwarding of the cause of the Queen of Scotland is truly a pious task, seeing her firmness in the Catholic religion and her attachment to your Majesty's interests which is proved by what I mention in my other letter as being contained in her letter to me of 20<sup>th</sup> May, and also by the papers found in her desk, but yet I find my hands tied in dealing with her interests here. I have therefore arranged for Nazareth to signify to this King that, if he did not at the present juncture, aid the Queen of Scotland with all the energy which his many ties to her demanded, he must recollect that, failing the Queen of Scotland, your Majesty was the next legitimate heir to the Crown, as her son was a heretic. This will be sure to put fire and spurs to his Councillors, who are so desirous of abating your Majesty's greatness, and will lead them to take strong action in the Queen of Scotland's favour, which it is only right that I should endeavour to forward, whilst at the same time it will be extremely advantageous (as her son is of age and persists in his heresy) that the truth with regard to your Majesty's rights to the three crowns of England, Ireland and Scotland should at once be made known, and the people made familiar with the claim and led to found their hopes upon it. Nazareth approved of this, although I did not go into further particulars with him, only that your Majesty was the rightful heir, and the idea was set afloat before Harry Wotton spoke to the King.

They say the latter intends to send Believre to England. He values this councillor so much that the very fact of his sending him will have an effect upon the Queen of England, and will somewhat temper her fury. This was indicated by the English ambassador here on the occasion that Charles Arundel arrived in Paris, when the Scots ambassador came and told me that the English ambassador would inform him through Arundel of what it was desirable he should know about his mistress' (the Queen of Scotland's) affairs, and begged me to give Arundel permission to visit the English ambassador. On Wotton's arrival, Stafford gave Arundel a precise account of the charges made against the Queen, in order that the King might be pre-informed of them, and said it would be well for him to send Believre to England, as the Queen considered him a politic and powerful minister, and he would consequently be well able to conduct the affair of the Queen of Scotland.

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Stafford also told Arundel about Drake's ships and the departure of Hawkins, and I am trying to get Arundel more into Stafford's intimacy in order that he may get fuller information on this and other points.

I send your Majesty a letter from Don Antonio received from Sampson. I hear from various quarters that Don Antonio is much dissatisfied with the Queen of England, who had assured him that out of the plunder to be brought back by Drake she would assign him funds to enable him to take a fleet to the coast of Portugal. Don Antonio is now unable to obtain means even to maintain the Portuguese he has with him in England, and the Queen told him not to burden himself with so many people as she could not feed them.

The Scottish gentleman, Robert Bruce, arrived here on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and I am hourly expecting a reply to the despatch I sent to the Prince of Parma in order to send him with it to Muzio (the Duke of Guise). Paris, 8<sup>th</sup> November 1586.