

SUMMARY: The document below is an undated letter from Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614) to Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590). The letter is endorsed 12 January 1581. The content confirms that it was written not long after Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel (d.1587) had been placed under arrest after having fled to the house of the Spanish ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza, on the night of 25 December 1580, and then turned themselves in to the authorities (see Archivo General de Simancas Leg. 835, ff. 121-4).

The letter also dates a significant event in the breach between Oxford and Lord Henry Howard. In the letter below, Howard writes that Oxford had sent him a:

message by Charles Arundel on Friday next shall be a month that either indirectly or directly, by right or wrong, he would be revenged

Since Howard's letter is endorsed 12 January 1580 [=1581], 'Friday next' would be the next day, 13 January 1581. Four weeks earlier would be Friday 16 December 1580.

This dating is confirmed by Charles Arundel in his answer to the sixth of several interrogatories compiled by Oxford and put to Arundel by the authorities (see TNA SP 12/151/44, ff. 98-9):

6 Ten days before this brabble was begun, he [=Oxford] sent him [=Howard] a message that either by means direct or indirect, by right or wrong, he would make him repent his leaving of his company.

Arundel considers that the 'brabble' began on the night of 25 December 1580. Ten days prior to that would be December 15, once again suggesting that it was on or about Friday 16 December 1580 that Oxford sent a message to Howard via Charles Arundel vowing revenge. Oxford's message was precipitated by the fact that Howard had refused to be any longer in Oxford's company at court, a very public insult. It is not known when Howard adopted this course of conduct; however it seems likely it was a few days before 16 December 1580. The fact that the contention between Oxford and Howard began in this way and at this time has not hitherto been noticed. Nor has it been noticed hitherto that in the beginning the contention was only between Oxford and Howard, and did not involve Charles Arundel or Francis Southwell. This is particularly evidenced by the fact that on 16 December 1580 Oxford used Arundel as a messenger between himself and Howard, indicating that at this point Arundel was still officially a neutral party in the Oxford-Howard dispute. It is also evidenced by the fact that on the night of 25 December 1580 Oxford met secretly with Arundel to try to persuade him to give evidence against Howard (see TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2). Arundel, however, immediately threw in his lot with Howard, and the two fled together that night to the house of the Spanish ambassador.

Howard indicates that interrogatories have already been put to him ('mine answers', 'mine answer which remaineth in your hand') and that he is currently under arrest at the

house of the Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas Bromley (c.1530-1587). He requests Walsingham to speak favourably to the Queen on his behalf, claiming that his only offence has been to hear Mass and that he knows the Queen is ready to forgive such an offence if the offender promises 'amendment'. Howard's claims and promises ring hollow when considered in light of Mendoza's letter of 25 December 1581 (see above) to King Philip of Spain indicating that Howard had voluntarily and assiduously supplied him with intelligence for the past year.

In passing, Howard alludes to the fact that Oxford is free, while he, Arundel and Southwell are under house arrest, and pictures Oxford smiling and triumphing at their 'durance'. Howard insinuates that Oxford's sole motive for giving evidence to the Queen against Howard, Arundel and Southwell is the revenge Oxford had earlier vowed against Howard.

Though neither it lie in the value of my well deserving toward you, good Mr Secretary, to claim your friendship as a debt, nor in the compass of my fortune to requite the same as a piece of luck unlooked for, yet since it hath already pleased you of your upright and honourable mind to friend me greatly in the true reporting of my dealings and mine answers to the Queen my mistress, I beseech you give me leave, together with most humble thanks for that which is already done, to crave your favour in the rest that is to do, and there to pitch one pillar of my trust from whom I have received the beginning of my comfort.

Time and travail in the sifting of these broken causes may persuade you that, in whatsoever manner private zeal might sway me from the current of the Queen's proceedings in respect of order, yet the same was done without contempt, and beside, no cause nor person under heaven could make me swerve one jot from my professed duty, faith and service to her Majesty or to the state of government. I would to God there were a window to the deepest secrets of my mind, that you might more easily decipher and discern my dealing. But it is enough that mine answer which remaineth in your hand concerning matters of estate is perfect, just and resolute.

Touching mine accuser, if the botches and deformities of his mis-shapen life suffice not to discredit and disgrace the warrant of his wreckful word, yet let his practice with some gentlemen to seek my life, his message by Charles Arundel on Friday next shall be a month that either indirectly or directly, by right or wrong, he would be revenged, and his seeking once again since that to corrupt Charles Arundel with a thousand pound, declare what truth or plainness resteth in his dealings.

To the point of hearing Mass against the course of common laws established for uniform agreement in the sacraments I can say no more but penitently *gravat praeterita magis reprehendi posse quam corrigi*, protesting notwithstanding that if by your favourable means I may recover pardon for my faults already past and gone, never to decline into the

like offence, nor by such means to put in hazard the desired grace and favour of the Queen, which is the strongest shelter and the surest ground-guard of my crazed fortune.

True it is that, resting not well satisfied in points about the sacrament, I rather chose in some sort to communicate with danger of the law than altogether to neglect that pipe whereby so great a strength might be derived to my faith, and so quiet a discharge of a loaden conscience. That many penalties belong to this attempt the world can witness and myself do feel, but since there is not any temporal advantage or commodity annexed hereunto, you may the better deem of my sincere proceeding in the matter.

Good Mr Secretary, let me require you, first for God's cause, who hath given you credit for relief of such are in harder plight, and then for your own honour (as by birth you are, and not by favour only, made a gentleman), but chiefly in respect of my profession never to commit the like offence, that you will move her Highness for my liberty. Experience hath taught me how inclinable her ears are to this kind of suit, and how prone her disposition is, upon assurance of amendment, to remit such like offences.

Touching my devotion to yourself, I rather wish you would believe what I profess and give my faith to be hereafter, than what you have been led to think I was by other men's unjust surmises. To continue my disgrace can avail you little; to redeem the service of a grateful mind by release of trouble is an honourable conquest. I know not how far malice of some persons hath prevailed in the shaking of your good opinion toward me more ways than one, but if you dare give credit to my faith or word, while I have breath I will not be forgetful of this favour. Here I live the loathest in the world to put my good Lord Chancellor to a greater charge than ever I am able to requite, and yet more loath to be removed any otherwhere without full liberty. I know my state dependeth much upon your dealing with the Queen in my behalf, and therefore I can say no more, but humbly desire the best, and remain as ready to deserve the uttermost. You cannot promise more unto her Majesty concerning my devotion to herself than shall be made good by the course and order of my dealings to them of my friends I doubt not will concur with you in this most reasonable suit, and he shall have less cause to vaunt who (floating in all kind of vice and shameful treacheries without care of God, of honour, or of nature) smileth and triumpheth at our durance. I craved leave of my Lord Chancellor to write this letter because I had a strong impression in my mind that you would do me good. And therefore, resting ready to acknowledge as much with my service during life as you can lay upon me with your favour at this present, I humbly take my leave.

Your most assured at commandment,
Henry Howard.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary to her Majesty, and one of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council; (2) 12 January 1580 [=1581] from the Lord Henry Howard