

SUMMARY: In this letter to Leicester written from Highgate on 27 October 1581, Lord Henry Howard speaks of the Queen's current inclination to restore his liberty, a condition of which appears to have been that Howard reconcile himself to Leicester, whom he had long considered responsible for the execution of his elder brother, Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk. In sycophantic terms, Howard attempts to make peace with Leicester by acknowledging that it is necessary for him to 'forget the bitter cause' of his former animosity and to relinquish his 'grudge' against Leicester. He muses that it should not be too difficult for Leicester to forgive him, since Leicester had earlier forgiven Oxford, and as a sort a pledge of his goodwill towards Leicester, Howard claims that he had often prevented Oxford from killing Leicester in the past. Animosity between Oxford and Leicester was long-standing, and there can be little doubt that in heated moments Oxford uttered threats against Leicester to his close friends, although there is no indication that he intended to carry them out. Since Howard himself bore the deepest enmity towards Leicester at the time Oxford made these threats, his claim that he 'stayed' Oxford's hand seems highly doubtful, although he may well have pointed out to Oxford how imprudent it would be to actually carry out his threats.

The cause of my forbearing to require your Lordship's favour during all these stormy times of trouble and disgrace proceedeth chiefly from 2 reasons: the first, despair of altering or ending your unkind conceit whereof I felt the smart for so many years and heard the sound so brimly out of every quarter as recovery seemed more than desperate. The second was a diligent regard and care to cut mine enemies from the least advantage of suggesting to your Lordship that rather respect to mine own necessity than desire of your Lordship's goodwill enforced this petition. But now that doubts and jealousies are happily provided for, and that it pleaseth God upon compassion of my wrongs to soften and incline the princely mind of my most gracious sovereign to pity my restraint, mine humble suit unto your Lordship is to banish all the relics of your former misconceit and, according to the discipline of Athens, to begin a fresh account of my well deserving. My meaning is not [+to] acquit or clear myself from all misdeeming of your Lordship's dealing toward me, but rather to excuse it by the fault and fall of Adam, who by nature hath conveyed a spark of grudge into the minds of all his offspring that conceive themselves to be deeply wounded, which is called in the scriptures *granum mali seminis*. Notwithstanding this, I trust your Lordship taketh in good part that what in heart I thought, my words and dealings openly professed to the world, and let me die if any man can prove that either toward you or any man alive I covered the grief of inward grudge with the vizard of hypocrisy or dissimulation, or that I gave my word to love when my mind was not bent to favour. All that remaineth to be done by me is first to forget the bitter cause, and then to repent the stubborn and undutiful effects of displeasures or misconceivings past. I have left my gift unoffered before the altar of Almighty God until either I be reconciled as I wish, or discharged in the sight of God from judgement by the proffer which is necessary. My part is charitably first, with St. Jerome to Damasus, to put your Lordship in mind *ne negligas animam pro qua Christus est mortuus*, not to disdain the soul for which Christ hath suffered. If hereupon it please you to remit displeasure, I

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will ever show myself as forward to acknowledge it by service as your Lordship shall be favourable in giving cause. If not, yet will I pray for you, and leaving the defence of my integrity to God who stinteth floods of strife, how far they shall extend, and guardeth those that solely put their trust in him, give your Lordship evident and certain tokens of my hurtless meaning by desert and sufferance. In the meantime, I cannot utterly despair of your Lordship's honourable dealing with me in this matter when I call to mind how great account your Lordship made of late of one that would have often stricken, to his shame, if I had not stayed his hand by reason both for conscience' sake and for mine own security. The practices were neither one nor two, as not my voice alone but nine or ten both can and will depose, if they may be called. God can witness with me that I lie not, though perhaps it may be taken for an oversight in me to repeat with spleen what your Lordship with an overrunning measure of sufferance and charity hath so long since pardoned. But if our custom be in prayers to Almighty God to crave remission, so much the more assuredly because he pardoned the thief upon the cross, I find no reason to forbid me, by the precedent of your Lordship's former kindness in the worst degrees of dealing, to prepare a passage to your Lordship's good opinion for the purging of less malice. Thus having plainly and in humble manner craved favour at your Lordship's hand, I recommend events to God, desiring him to guide your Lordship's mind as well in this as matters of more weight, to the preservation of true honour, the comfort of your own soul, and the spreading of his glory. From Highgate this 27 of October.

Your Lordship's, if it please you, at commandment,  
Henry Howard.

Addressed: To the right honourable the Earl of Leicester, one of the Lords of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council

Endorsed: 27 October 1581; the Lord Henry Howard