

SUMMARY: The document below is a memorandum dated 21 September 1603 written by Henry Clinton (1539-1616), 2nd Earl of Lincoln, in which Lincoln defends himself for his failure to report to King James in a timely manner his conversations with the French ambassador Christophe de Harlay, Comte de Beaumont, with a Mr Trudgion, and with the Earl of Oxford. Among other excuses, Clinton states that he had imparted these matters to Sir John Peyton (1544-1630), Lieutenant of the Tower, prior to Queen Elizabeth's death. The memorandum was likely sent to Sir Robert Cecil (1563-1612).

Lincoln's mention of Peyton's involvement caused Cecil to write to Peyton for an explanation, which resulted in Peyton's letter and report to Cecil of 10 October 1603 (see TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9).

The Earl of Lincoln was a relation of Oxford's by marriage. Lincoln's wife Elizabeth (nee Morison) was the mother, by her first marriage to William Norris (d.1579), of Oxford's son-in-law, Francis Norris (1579-1622), 2nd Baron Norris of Rycote.

Whilst her Majesty lived, the French ambassador made means by divers to hire my house at Chelsea, among which Mr Trudgion did also solicit me, to whom I did once in some sort grant my consent, but afterwards understanding that her Majesty was in danger, I refused to let my said house in respect of my hope of the King's Majesty's likelihood to reign over us, her Majesties recovery being doubtful, in which time of her sickness I had many discourses with Mr Trudgion touching his Majesty (whom God long preserve) in all which, for that I found him speak doubtfully of him & his entry to be our King, & seemed to me rather to lean to the title of the Infanta, I did press him by the best means I could to deliver his reasons, which were these, videlicet, that he knew that there was a resolution more than 3 years past by the court of Rome, the King of Spain, of France & other princes to keep him from coming into this realm, & though he did, that he should not reign long after if he did not condescend to those articles in religion then resolved, & that they all would make war against him & maintain some other title.

These words being delivered of his knowledge, & those speeches of the Earl's of Oxford that if any were sent into France (how small soever his title were), showing the example of one of his ancestors, & likewise naming the Lord Hastings, made me fear & think that these men might do the King good service in bewraying their knowledge, which I thought my duty to impart if I had any possible means to inform his Majesty. But so it pleased God that within few days after, afore any advertisement could be sent, I saw this chiefest point of this resolution frustrate by God's goodness in sending his quiet entry, & yet nevertheless went to the Tower afore her Majesty's death, told Sir J{ohn} Peyton thereof, who (as one that is his Majesty's faithful servant) answered, I hope you will tell the King hereof, to whom I said, You may be sure of it if ever I may speak with him.

I told Sir Hugh Harris thereof, & Sergeant Harris, & others, beside my letters to his Majesty sent by Sir H. Bromley & my son, & still remaining in hope to impart it myself

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to his Majesty, was loath to publish it to many in respect of the danger & malice which I knew should be borne against me to my undoing, if his Majesty do lightly regard my imminent danger, which I have great cause humbly to crave at his Majesty's hand.

These being the points material, & I ready to set down any circumstances which shall be demanded or thought fit (if any be hereafter remembered) videlicet, the speeches concerning the means of sending an army from Flanders, the hope of a number of Catholics in England, & many such reasons, for that they were not set down of his knowledge but rather as reasons which way this resolution should be performed which he had before declared, I do touch in fewer words than they were spoken, not omitting the cause which induced me to believe that his intelligence from beyond the seas was great from all Catholics (as they term them), first for that his eldest son is with the Archduke, his youngest in a popish school or university, from whence he hath often intelligence, & the continual resort to him of many & the principal recusants.

These things that I have for my love & duty set down to th' intent that his Majesty may know from them their further knowledge, I trust by your wisdoms shall be so used that those that have a desire to advance his service & safety shall neither be terrified with bitter speeches, nor advantages sought to the discouraging of others to reveal whatsoever is likely to discover his enemies.

The words of the French ambassador in my garden concerning the King, being few & of no importance, are scant worthy reciting, videlicet, when I spake of the strength by uniting the kingdom he answered in French, More men, but less money.

Endorsed: (1) 21 September, Earl of Lincoln.