

SUMMARY: The letter below dated 11 September 1581 written by Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604) to King Philip II concerns the imminent departure of Don Antonio from England. Mendoza states that Oxford had been deputed to accompany him, but writes that 'I do not venture to assert that they will go, as it depends upon these fickle people, and I fear he may still be detained here'. Mendoza's fears proved to be well grounded. His letter to King Philip of 1 October 1581 indicates the Don Antonio was not permitted to sail from England until 30 September, and his letter of 27 September indicates that before he could leave England Don Antonio had been required to pledge the jewels which he had brought with him for a further £12,000.

The letter below, along with Mendoza's letters of 12 August and 27 September, contributes to confusion concerning the 'Lord Howard' or 'Lord Harry' whom Queen Elizabeth sent as an envoy to her suitor, Francois (1554-1584), Duke of Alencon and Anjou, after Sir Francis Walsingham's interview with Alencon on 3 August 1581. The background to this interview is provided in the entry for Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590) in *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

*On 22 July [1581], however, Walsingham was sent on an embassy to France that lasted until 21 September. Just after the marriage treaty was signed Henri had informed Elizabeth that he was prepared to consider a full alliance after the marriage was concluded, yet at the same time it was obvious that he was trying to obstruct his brother's Netherlands plans. The basic purpose of the embassy was to discover what he was up to and to keep Anjou's enterprise alive. The complex instructions Walsingham was given reflect the genuine English puzzlement over Henri's intentions. Walsingham tried to escape the embassy, fearing a repetition of 1578, but without success. There was, however, a challenge for him. During the spring he had become increasingly interested in plans for a naval expedition to aid the Portuguese pretender, Dom Antonio, and invested in it himself. In May Dom Antonio had sent an envoy to Elizabeth, who claimed that Henri had promised him assistance. When Elizabeth offered to share the costs the French king replied that he would do so only after the marriage. Walsingham observed to Huntingdon on 29 June, 'yt is to be gathered by this could [cold] answer that yf the mariadge take not place, the portugalls can look for no relefe out of France and that the French King will come some other coorse' (Hunt. L., Hastings MS 13070).*

*Once in France, Walsingham went first to see Anjou at his crowded headquarters at La Fère-en-Tardenois on 3 August 1581, where they had to retire to the latter's bedchamber to escape the noise of the courtiers in the adjoining apartment. Here he expressed Elizabeth's concern that the marriage would commit her to an open war with Spain, though she was willing to ally with France and would aid him discreetly. Anjou replied that his brother would do nothing until the marriage was concluded. However, he responded to her promise of assistance by requesting a loan to keep his forces in the field. Walsingham thought this a good way of retaining control of him. Shortly afterwards Walsingham encountered Catherine, who had come to dissuade Anjou from the enterprise and to agree to a Spanish marriage, but he apparently managed to persuade her to support an English alliance. He then went to Paris, where he had his first audience*

*with Henri on 10 August. He found him difficult to pin down, but concluded that without the marriage Henri would not agree to an alliance. On 24 August Elizabeth followed Walsingham's advice by agreeing quickly to the loan Anjou had requested. However, at the same time Walsingham discovered that his negotiations with Henri were being sabotaged by reports from Mauvissière and Anjou's agent Pierre Clause, sieur de Marchaumont, that Elizabeth would ultimately proceed with the marriage. With this stalemate his embassy came to an end.*

Mendoza states in his letter of 12 August 1581 that after the Queen received news of Walsingham's interview of 3 August 1581 with Alencon, she 'wept like a child', and 'sent Lord Howard to Alencon to mollify him, writing most sweetly, so as not to lose him altogether'. Another letter of Mendoza's dated 27 September 1581 reports his return a month later:

*Lord Harry, whom this Queen sent to Alencon, has returned. He reports that Alencon was marching along the French frontier towards Boulogne, saying that he was going to Dunkirk for greater facility for his coming hither.*

The letter below also mentions 'Lord Harry' in connection with the return of one Sterling, a gentleman of the Queen's chamber who had accompanied him on this mission:

*Alencon has sent back to the Queen her gentleman of the chamber, Sterling (Somers?), who went over with Lord Harry. He only brings a letter for her and one for Marchaumont, dated the 4<sup>th</sup> instant at Chatelet, where Alencon was with 3,000 men, the rest of his force having broken up. Marchaumont says, since this man's arrival, that Alencon will certainly be here shortly in disguise, and will pretend he is going to see Orange, the better to carry out his intention. The Queen has sent Sterling (Somers?) back again to Alencon today. She was not pleased with his visit.*

Historians have identified the 'Lord Howard' and 'Lord Harry' referred to in these letters as Oxford's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614). This identification seems highly improbable since Howard and Charles Arundel had both been arrested after fleeing to the house of the Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, at midnight on 25 December 1580, and in a letter endorsed 20 July 1581 (see CP 98/129) Howard speaks of himself as still a 'prisoner', and complains that 'when my liberty is spoken of, her Majesty begins to speak of trial face to face'. Moreover on 27 October 1581 Howard wrote a sycophantic letter to Leicester (see TNA SP 12/150/51, ff. 97-8) in which he speaks of himself as being under 'restraint':

*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.*

It thus appears that Howard was a prisoner, or under house arrest at least, from 27 December 1580 until 27 October 1581, and that it was a condition of his release that he ask forgiveness of Leicester, whom he had blamed for the execution in 1572 of his brother, Thomas Howard, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk.

Under these circumstances, it seems certain that Mendoza was mistaken if he himself in fact identified the 'Lord Howard' and 'Lord Harry' who was sent to Alencon in August 1581 as Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614). However given the fact that Mendoza's rendering of the names of members of the English nobility is extremely erratic, it is possible that the mistake is the translator's, rather than Mendoza's. In his letter of 25 December 1581 to King Philip II, for example, Mendoza refers to Lord Henry Howard as 'Milord Harihabart' (see Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, fols. 121-4).

To further add to the confusion, the letter below refers to a 'Lord Howard' who is presently in England:

*the same night [the Queen] sent a gentleman of her chamber to tell Lord Howard and Philip Sidney to accompany Don Antonio*

It seems likely that the Lord Howard referred to in this case was the Queen's kinsman Charles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Howard of Effingham (1536-1624).

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. 171-2.

Whilst I was handing the accompanying despatch to the courier, I heard that Don Antonio intended to take leave of the Queen next day, so I detained the man until I had heard what was the result of the interview.

There was news here that two valuable Spanish ships loaded at Antwerp had anchored in the Downs, the wind being against them. Don Antonio's three ships, which are at Blackwall, on the contrary, were favoured by the wind and prepared to drop down the river with the intention of capturing the two Spanish ships, which I had already warned to quit the port. I also sent to tell the English merchants who usually ship goods at Antwerp consigned to Spaniards, that if Don Antonio's ships carried out their design they, the merchants, would be the first persons to suffer for the damage done. This was the best course to take rather than complaining to the Council, as the merchants, in order that the property should not fall into the hands of Don Antonio, took such steps as procured a stop from the Queen, forbidding Don Antonio's ships from moving until further orders. He was notified by the Judge of the Admiralty that the Queen had prohibited the sale of any

English ships to foreigners, and those that had already been sold were not to be allowed to leave port.

She hoped that Don Antonio would not take this amiss, but if he wished his ships to be allowed to sail he was to sign a bond, as it is called here, which the Judge of the Admiralty took to him in Latin, undertaking that his ships should do no injury to your Majesty's subjects. Don Antonio had had notice of the stoppage of his ships the day before, and after reading the bond brought to him by the Judge of the Admiralty at 8 o'clock in the morning, he started out booted and spurred, after dinner, with all his Portuguese, hastily putting his baggage into a boat, and went to take leave of the Queen. He arrived at the Court unexpected by her with the intention of at once proceeding on his journey, but the Queen spoke tenderly to him, although he was offended about the stoppage of his ships, and said that as he had now missed the tide and it was very dark, he had better return to London for the night and postpone his departure until the next day. He did so, and the same night she sent a gentleman of her chamber to tell Lord Howard and Philip Sidney to accompany Don Antonio. The four ships were ready to leave today by the midday tide, but a message from the Queen came at 10 o'clock, which further delayed them, and it is expected they will sail tomorrow. The Earl of Oxford has been ordered to accompany him, but I do not venture to assert that they will go, as it depends upon these fickle people, and I fear he may still be detained here. I do not know whether he will go to France or to the Prince of Orange, to whom he has sent two Portuguese, but I will let your Majesty know as soon as I can learn. I have advised Tassis some days ago of his intention of leaving. Four Portuguese came for him recently, having come in a poor boat from St. Ubes in 18 days. They landed at Dover, and wore false beards.

Alencon has sent back to the Queen her gentleman of the chamber, Sterling (Somers?), who went over with Lord Harry.\* He only brings a letter for her and one for Marchaumont, dated the 4<sup>th</sup> instant at Chatelet, where Alencon was with 3,000 men, the rest of his force having broken up. Marchaumont says, since this man's arrival, that Alencon will certainly be here shortly in disguise, and will pretend he is going to see Orange, the better to carry out his intention. The Queen has sent Sterling (Somers?) back again to Alencon today. She was not pleased with his visit. London, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1581.