

SUMMARY: In this letter dated 13 December 1582 from Don Bernardino de Mendoza (d.1604) to King Philip II, Mendoza says that Oxford's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614), whom he refers to as his 'second confidant', has been offered a pension to spy for France, but has refused it:

I understand that M. de la Mothe brings four blank grants of pensions from the King of France, two of 2,000 crowns, one of 1,000, and one of 500. With the two largest they will tempt Lord Hunsdon and James Crofts the controller, who are needy persons, and the 1,000 crowns pension they have offered to my second confidant, who has refused it, saying that there is no need for resorting to such means to pledge him to French interests. He says this, in order not to break off his communications with the French, which enable him to give me minute accounts of everything they do, without anyone dreaming of such a thing, as he never asks for any information from me, except after your Majesty's health.

It seems clear from the contacts Mendoza had with the French that Howard could not have accepted a pension from the French without Mendoza knowing of it. Thus, the reality was that, whether he wished to accept the pension or not, Howard could not have accepted it without jeopardizing his arrangement with Mendoza and King Philip of Spain, and he therefore refused it on the ground that he was already pledged to French interests without the need for the financial reward of a pension from France.

Concerning the date of this letter, it should be noted that on 24 February 1582 a bull of Pope Gregory XIII ordered the use of a reformed calendar which cut ten days out of the year 1582, so that 15 October followed immediately upon 4 October (see *Handbook of Dates*, p. 10). The change had occurred by the time this letter of 13 December 1582 was written. However since he was writing from England, Mendoza may have continued to use Old Style dating.

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. 421-5.

By the Portuguese from Terceira, most of whom had embarked, I wrote to your Majesty on the 29th ultimo. With regard to your Majesty's orders of 1st November that I should report respecting the arming of ships in Holland and Zeeland, I have already written that the affair has ended in smoke. I have recently heard that the stores and victuals have now been taken out of the ships, and that two of the latter at Texel, after they were discharged, had gone with the other sloops to Spain for salt, there being no rumour of an armed sect. I have a special man both in Zeeland and at the Sluys to keep me well posted on the

points of which your Majesty desires to be informed.

The Queen has written to her ambassador Cobham, instructing him to make himself acquainted with the disposition of the King of France with regard to the second condition she had proposed for the marriage, and also what security she was to have for the money she had advanced to Alencon. The King replied to the first point, that the Queen was only seeking pretexts to avoid the marriage, and he could go no further in the matter, or the world would laugh at him and his brother. As to the second question, he said that, as Alencon had embarked in the Netherlands enterprise entirely on her account and at her instance, and had spent therein ten times as much money as she had given him, she had no reason to expect any further security for the money than his brother's sincerity and goodwill, of which he had so often given proofs.

M. de la Mothe FeneIon arrived here on the 29th ultimo, and the moment Walsingham heard of it in one of his own houses, he started for the court in a great fright. The Earl of Ormond was with the Treasurer when the latter received the letter announcing the arrival, and Ormond says he was much upset at the news. When Ormond remarked that La Mothe's journey to Scotland could bode no good for the Queen, Cecil replied that when new friends failed they must embrace the old ones again, and the dance would end without fear of strife.

I understand that M. de la Mothe's mission consists mainly of two points, which have been conveyed to me by a confidant of his. First, to conclude, one way or the other, the long-drawn-out marriage negotiation by telling the Queen clearly that the King of France will pledge himself no further than he has already done in the document he sent. If the Queen is not satisfied with this she may seek a husband where she will, and will perhaps repent of it yet, but if notwithstanding this she chooses to effect the marriage with his brother, he will conclude an offensive and defensive alliance with her against any prince. The responsibility for breaking off the marriage must rest upon her, and, if it do not take place, he and his brother will be free to choose their own course.

The second point refers to Scotland, and is in the same spirit. He is to tell the Queen that, if she do not cease to foster trouble and dissension in Scotland, holding the King prisoner in the hands of his own subjects, who had already taken the crown from his mother for their own ends alone, he, the King of France, as an old ally and kinsman of the crown of Scotland, would endeavour to prevent the success of her designs for the sake of his own reputation and that of all Christian princes, who were deeply interested in stopping so dangerous and evil a thing as the imprisonment of a king by his vassals. He is to assure her that if she persists in so unjust a course as this, he will aid the King of Scotland with all his might to punish his subjects, and he marvels much what can be her object in thus trying to ruin a king, and her own kinsman, who has never done her any harm. He advises her also not to furnish an occasion for the world to believe that all the evils that have befallen his mother have arisen and been guided by rancour and malice. If the Queen says that she has acted for the good of the Scottish King, La Mothe is to reply that an act whereby a friend is placed in peril of his life, liberty and crown cannot be looked upon as a proof of affectionate solicitude for his welfare. If she refuses to give him

permission to proceed on his embassy to Scotland, he will try other means elsewhere to get there, and would prevent the continuance of the sedition which is causing the ruin of the King and country. He would clear up the aims of the conspirators, who under the shadow of this Queen were bent upon destroying both mother and son, with the object of afterwards elevating a sovereign of their own making.

He is also to ask permission to visit the Queen of Scotland on his way, but he is not to press this point very warmly, in consequence of the letters the Queen of Scotland has written to the King of France through her ambassador. When he arrives in Scotland he is to endeavour to elucidate past events, and thereafter take the most desirable course in view of the same, bearing in mind that, if any fault is attributable to the King, it should be laid to his tender age, and if his subjects should have offended, he is to intercede for them. Finally, he is to use every effort to get the King restored to full liberty, without which the King of France will make no conditions whatever.

If any of the Scotch lords urge that Lennox should leave the country, La Mothe is to inquire into the reasons for this, and if he finds him blameless, he is to try for him to remain, if not as a Scot, then as a Frenchman and his subject and ambassador. He (La Mothe) is on no account to leave Scotland until the King (of Scots) is in a position to choose any adviser he may wish. If, as may be suspected, the conspirators, at the instance of this Queen, refuse La Mothe a safe-conduct to enter the country, and persist in this course, he is to warn them against what they are doing, as the King of France will not allow them to oppress their King, but will punish such disrespect more promptly than they expect. The confidant asked La Mothe how the King intended to do this, and he said he would immediately send the Duke of Guise or Mayenne to Scotland with 5,000 foot soldiers, the Duke of Lorraine having offered, if necessary, to conduct the expedition in person, in order that people may not think that the failure to undertake so necessary a task arose from any want of valour. I am given to understand from other sources as well that the above is the exact mission confided to De la Mothe, but although he may be instructed to use such words, I see no manifest signs that the French will back them up with deeds, but that the real object is to comply in appearance with the Pope and the Queen of Scotland in face of the world, whilst under cover of this they frighten this Queen into giving money to Alencon to maintain himself in the Netherlands. I am led to this opinion by the fact that the King of France shortly before had instructed his ambassador here to speak to the Queen about Scotch affairs to the same effect as La Mothe is instructed to do, but the ambassador begged to be allowed to defer it until a better opportunity, in order that the Queen might not be angry with him, and therefore fail to send to Alencon the rest of the money she had promised. The ambassador was under the impression, when he wrote this, that the King would agree, and would delay La Mothe's departure, but the latter had already left. The Queen of Scotland heard of it, and wrote to the ambassador, complaining that solely in Alencon's interest he should obstruct a step so advantageous to the crown of France. The Queen and her Ministers show no present indications of a desire to seek your Majesty, all their talk in that direction hitherto being only for the purpose of influencing the French, but they would certainly do so earnestly if their friends in France saw any intention on the part of the King to open his arms to Scotch affairs.

I thought, on the occasion of La Mothe's arrival, to draw them out somewhat, and make them seek me, in the fear that I might withdraw from the country, and the moment I received your Majesty's despatch I published that, in consequence of my indisposition, your Majesty had promised to give me leave. But they did not move a hair, and from this and the action of the French ambassador, I can only conclude that the French are merely using the Scotch business as a lever to compel the Queen to help Alencon, and the Queen-mother's tricks, whilst this Queen is holding off as long as possible, so as to keep her money, and at the same time to settle affairs in Scotland to her own liking. She will then be able to continue to disturb your Majesty by helping the rebels, upon which course she bases her own tranquillity.

I understand that M. de la Mothe brings four blank grants of pensions from the King of France, two of 2,000 crowns, one of 1,000, and one of 500. With the two largest they will tempt Lord Hunsdon and James Crofts the controller, who are needy persons, and the 1,000 crowns pension they have offered to my second confidant, who has refused it, saying that there is no need for resorting to such means to pledge him to French interests. He says this, in order not to break off his communications with the French, which enable him to give me minute accounts of everything they do, without anyone dreaming of such a thing, as he never asks for any information from me, except after your Majesty's health.

As soon as La Mothe arrived the Queen sent to ask him to come to court, saying that he must stay a week with her, this being another trick to give her time in Scotland, whither she instantly sent a courier. Marchaumont presses the Queen warmly to allow him to leave. He is offended with his master for not paying him his expenses here, or sending money for his maintenance. I am told that he is in closer correspondence with the King than with Alencon, and that quite recently Montpensier, the Prince Dauphin, who is now Duke of Montmorenci, complained that at a banquet here Alencon had said that the King of France was siding with the house of Guise against the princes of France. The King told him to be careful in future what he said, and not stir up evil humours.

Servants of the Duke of Medina Sidonia in San Lucar and Cadiz wrote hither a month ago that the Duke had had 10,000 men ready to go over by your Majesty's orders to take possession of Larache. The Queen hearing of this sent Jan Sympcote a week ago with letters to the sheriff to prevent it, offering him such aid and munitions as he may require. This Sympcote is a merchant, a man of 55, of good constitution, and wears a grey beard. He takes in the ship a quantity of powder and some arras. The man who I said had gone to Constantinople is, I am told, to reside there, and the Queen gave him a service of silver plate for use and £1,000 a year. He shipped his servants and household as if they were passengers, and left alone himself afterwards as a merchant's servant. London, 13th December 1582.