

SUMMARY: The document below is an excerpt from a letter written from Venice in May 1575 by Sir Richard Shelley to Oxford's father-in-law, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, mentioning the hospitality he had offered to Oxford on his arrival in Italy. Shelley was related by marriage to Oxford's mother-in-law, Lady Burghley. From the *ODNB*:

*Shelley, Sir Richard (c.1513–1587), diplomat and prior of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England, was the second son of the judge Sir William Shelley (1478/9–1549) and Alice Belknap (d.1536), both of Sussex.*

Sir William Shelley and Alice Belknap had seven sons, including Sir Richard Shelley, and seven daughters, one of whom, Elizabeth Belknap (died c. 6 March 1504), married Sir Philip Cooke (d. 7 December 1503), grandfather of Sir Anthony Cooke (d. 11 June 1576), father of Lord Burghley's wife, Mildred Cooke Cecil. See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, Vol. IV, pp. 142-5.

As noted in the excerpt below, when Oxford arrived in Italy in 1575, Shelley sent one of his gentleman servants to Oxford to offer him a furnished house in Padua, and the like in Venice. However Oxford requested that Shelley not contact him further until he could learn the Queen's view as to how he should conduct himself towards Shelley, presumably in view of Shelley's Catholicism.

From the *ODNB*:

*The final phase of Shelley's life now opened, in Venice, at the invitation of the government of that republic. There, in April 1574, he was noted by Philip Sidney as 'very much devoted to papist superstitions' (Pears, Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney, 50). In July of the same year, though ill, he journeyed on to Prague and Hamburg, but by June 1575 he was evidently back in Venice. From there a long series of letters home, written in the 1570s and 1580s to the queen and to the secretary of state, Sir Francis Walsingham, shows that he acted as a semi-official, unpaid, commercial representative of English merchants' fiscal concerns. In this correspondence he vehemently protested both his loyalty to the queen (involving the refusal of a Spanish pension), and his unbudging Catholicism.*

. . . . And so for this time will I break off the tale, hereafter to be continued with your Lordship, saving that I must needs add touching the Earl of Oxford one word or two.

I sent a gentleman of mine to Padua with a letter to give him the hora buona of his welcome and safe arrival, offering him there a house furnished that should have cost him nothing, and to have provided him the like again [=against] his coming hither to Venice, with all the service that I was able any way to do his Lordship. He thanked me by a letter for my courtesy, praying me nevertheless very earnestly hereafter to forbear the sending

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to him either letter or message till he should know how I was thought of by the Queen's most excellent Majesty, which affection and wariness, albeit I liked very well in so great a subject, yet on th' other side it appalled me much that I, for all my wariness and fidelity, should be in jealousy, as it were of a fugitive, which I understand is grown only by the occupation(?) of my house that you, my Lord, gave me and got me by the Palace of Westminster, the occupation whereof I would not so much esteem, as your Lordship seeth that for my part it was di[ ] and passed with silence, albeit my conveyances in the law and disprement were made in Queen Mary's time . . . .