

SUMMARY: The document below is a copy in Lord Burghley's hand of a letter dated 7 December 1581 to Oxford from his wife, Anne Cecil. Oxford had estranged himself from Anne after his return from the continent in April 1576 on the ground that Elizabeth Vere, born to Anne on 2 July 1575, was not his child.

Oxford and Anne's reconciliation was discussed in the context of Oxford release from house arrest in the summer of 1581. Oxford had been imprisoned in the Tower, and later placed under house arrest, after his mistress, Anne Vavasour, gave birth to Oxford's illegitimate son, Edward Vere. See a letter dated 23 March 1581 from Sir Francis Walsingham to Henry Hastings, 3rd Earl of Huntingdon, advising of the birth of Edward Vere, Huntington Library HA 13066; a letter dated 12 July 1581 from Sir Francis Walsingham to Lord Burghley mentioning the possibility of a reconciliation between Oxford and Anne, TNA SP 12/149/67, ff. 156-7; and a copy of a letter dated 13 July 1581 from Lord Burghley to Sir Christopher Hatton, thanking him for discussing the issue with the Queen, BL Add. 15891, f. 77.

For Anne's letter to Oxford dated 12 December 1581, see BL Lansdowne 104/64, ff. 166-7.

My Lord, in what misery may I account myself to be, that neither can see any end thereof, nor yet any hope how to diminish it. And now of late, having had some hope in my own conceit that your Lordship would have renewed some part of your favour that you began to show me this summer when you made me assurance of your good meaning, though you seemed fearful how to show it by open actions, now after long silence of hearing anything from you, at the length I am informed (but how truly I know not, and yet how uncomfortably I do feel it) that your Lordship is entered into some misliking of me without any cause in deed or thought. And therefore, my good Lord, I beseech you in the name of that God that knoweth all my thoughts and my love towards you notwithstanding your evil usage of me, let me know the truth of your meaning towards me, upon what cause you are moved to continue me in this misery, and what you would have me do in my power to recover your constant favour, so as your Lordship may not be led still to detain me in calamity without some probable cause, whereof I appeal to God, I am utterly innocent. From my father's house in Westminster, the 7th December, 1581.

Endorsed: 7 December 1581, a copy of a letter from the Countess of Oxford to her husband, the Earl