

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 7 November or 7 December 1574 written to Mildred Cecil, Lady Burghley by Sir Thomas Smith in which he expresses concern at the serious illness of her daughter, Oxford's wife, Anne Cecil, and extols the virtues of the medicine of his own distillation which he has sent her, about which some doubt had been expressed.

It should be noted that in the letter below Smith uses the word 'miscarry' in the Elizabethan sense of 'come to harm', since according to Dr Masters' letter of 7 March 1575, Anne Cecil's pregnancy only became evident two or three months later at Shrove-tide, that is, February 13-15 1575. See Dr Masters' letter, BL Lansdowne 19/83, ff. 181-2. Moreover the use of 'miscarry' in the sense of 'to have a miscarriage' appears to have been rare in 1574 (the *OED* records only one example prior to 1643), while the use of 'miscarry' in the sense of 'come to harm' had been in common use since the late 1300s.

Madam. I sent yesterday of my water to my Lord for my Lady of Oxford. Methinks there is some doubt made of it. If it please God that she have so much natural heat in her as may join with it, I doubt not your Ladyship shall have great comfort of it, & she much help. There is nothing in it but such as is daily eaten & drunken; no purgation, no spew, but it hath such virtue that, next to God, I owe my health to it, & so many as hath once used it hath given me thanks, & do repute it a singular thing. It doth but help nature, not constrain it. If it be vomited out (any heat being in the body), it cannot be vomited out before the chief virtue of it be dispersed, for the fennel & angelica water can be vomited out; the rest with the first heat is dispersed. If her Ladyship do not find immediately comfort in it, then nature is too feeble. I can say no more. But I would be as sorry that my Lady of Oxford should miscarry as if she were 5 times my daughter, for divers causes, & would be as glad to do her good as any living, next to your Ladyship, & if those 2 waters were not in it to temper it, I durst say she should not vomit it out, giving but a spoonful, if life were in the body, for it should disperse straight, & comfort immediately the vital spirits.

Let it be given alone, & by a spoonful at a time, till she herself shall require more.

Pardon my foolishness, madam. It is my goodwill deserved of my Lord and you, & the love which I bear to my Lady of Oxford which causeth me write these, & so commend you to God. From Hampton Court, the 7th of Nr.(?) 1574.

Your Ladyship's at commandment,
T. Smith

Addressed: To the right honourable, my very good Lady, the Lady Burghley

Endorsed: 7 December ['Nov' appears to have been crossed out] 1574: Mr Secretary Smith to my Lady with a water for the stomach