

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 30 April 1563 from Oxford's mother, Margery (nee Golding), Countess of Oxford, to Sir William Cecil indicating that she is being pressured to decide whether she will accept the burden of execution of the will of her late husband, John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford. For the will, see TNA PROB 11/46/247.

The 16th Earl's will was proved on 29 May 1563, at which time the sole executor to receive a grant of administration was Robert Christmas, who was already in, or about to enter, Leicester's service (see BL Lansdowne 6/34, ff. 96-7 and TNA SP 15/13/5). The Countess resigned as executor on 22 July 1563, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that she and the four other executors had been forced out. It was not until 19 April 1570 that the 16th Earl's son and heir, Edward de Vere, was joined with Robert Christmas in the administration of the 16th Earl's will. The fact that no-one but Leicester's servant, Robert Christmas, administered the 16th Earl's will until April 1570 raises many questions about the manner in which the will, and the 16th Earl's lands, were administered between 1562 and that date.

Ih{es}us

Good Master Secretary, I call to my remembrance that about mid Lent last past I received sundry letters of like importance to that end I should use expedition in the probate of my late Lord & husband's will (whose soul God have). I received them by one messenger and at one instant, whereby I gathered generally that complaints had been brought to my Lord of Norfolk's Grace & to my Lord Robert Dudley by sundry that the only let why my late Lord's will hath not been proved or exhibited hath been only in me and through my delays, and the awctors [=actors? authors?] of that could as well have said, if it had pleased them, that I was fully minded in this Easter term at the furthest by God's help to have made my full determination either in taking upon me or in refusing by such good advice as I can get, and that done, to have made you & my son privy what I had intended, and so consequently my Lord's Grace & my Lord Robert Dudley, who have the like trust committed to them. And thus much I intended & determined in the hearing of all the rest of the executors & other of my friends.

And good Mr Secretary, let me be purged with you and with other of the Queen's Highness' most honourable Privy Council with any suspicion that I should be a slander to my Lord's will and not perform the trust committed unto me, as I have been of late burdened, I confess, that a great trust hath been committed to me of those things which in my Lord's lifetime was kept most secret from me. And since that time the doubtful declaration of my Lord's debts hath so uncertainly fallen out that by such advice as I have always hitherto found most sound to me I had rather leave [-up?] the whole doings thereof to my son, if by your good advice I may so deal honourably, than to venture further and uncertainly, altogether with peril.

And good Master Secretary, I most heartily pray you to consider me in such things as I have heretofore been a suitor to you for, which were in my late Lord's hands for the provision of his house, only desiring it none otherwise but to be preferred & considered for my money before a stranger. And to wait upon you to that end, I send up one of my men of purpose to give you instructions of such things as I shall have greatest want of.

And what my further determination is touching the will, yet loath to determine without your good advice for that I mean the honour of gain, if any be, might come wholly to my [f. 69v] son who is under your charge and should be by your good advice the soundlier dealt withal at other men's hands, that the honourable dealing therein might only sound to him, I rather bend myself for my part to leave the whole doings thereof to him.

And herein, and in all other things wherein I have been bold to trouble you always, I most heartily & humbly pray you to continue your good advice & friendship towards me. And loath to trouble you further, with my right hearty commendations to you and my good Lady, I leave you both to God, with increase of all honour to both your hearts' desire this 30th of April 1563.

Your most assured to command in that she may,
M. Oxinford

Addressed: To the right honourable and her very assured Mr Secretary Cecil, deliver these at the court

Endorsed: [*Cut off, but appears to read: 20 April 1563, my Lady of Oxenford to my master*].

[*In another later(?) hand: In answer to her delays to prove her lately deceased Lord's will, being disposed to renounce it, & leave it to her son.*]