

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter in Latin written in 1563 by Lawrence Nowell to his master, Sir William Cecil, ‘complaining of the inaccuracy of the general maps of England, and stating his design of constructing maps of all the counties, if he should meet with Sir William’s encouragement’. In the course of the letter Nowell points out that he is able to undertake this project now that his services as tutor to the 13-year-old Oxford will not be much longer required. Cosmography was one of the subjects in the program of studies drawn up by Cecil for Oxford in 1562, and since this was a subject in which Nowell had a marked interest, it seems likely that he was Oxford’s tutor at Cecil House from the beginning of Oxford’s stay there in September 1562. See TNA SP 12/26/50.

The Latin transcript below is taken from Ellis, Henry, *Original Letters of Eminent Literary Men of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (London: Camden Society, 1843), pp. 21-3 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=TRJdAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA22&lpg=PA22&dq=%22diuturna+expectatione%22&source=bl&ots=C4oQCEJee&sig=jUz_YWgkThI_p6L9K4W1yqJCAR8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=wUFSVczgNoKnoQSiqYD4Dg&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22diuturna%20expectatione%22&f=false.

The English translation is taken from Skelton, R.A., *Saxton’s Survey of England and Wales*, Imago Mundi Supplement vi (Amsterdam: Nico Israel, 1974), pp. 15-16.

From the *ODNB*:

Nowell, Laurence (1530–c.1570), antiquary, was the second son of Alexander Nowell of Read Hall, Whalley, Lancashire, and Grace, daughter of Rafe Catherall of Mitton in the same county. . . By early 1563 at the latest he was residing at Sir William Cecil's house in the Strand, London, where he made a transcription (BL, Add. MS 43703) of several Anglo-Saxon texts, including the Old English Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. He also owned what is now BL, Cotton MS Vitellius A.xv in the British Library, the collection of Anglo-Saxon writings sometimes known as the Nowell codex, which contains the only surviving text of Beowulf.

Thomas Randolph had recommended Nowell as a scholar and cartographer to Cecil, who by June 1563 appointed Nowell as the tutor of his ward and future son-in-law, Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford. About that time, having requested employment as Cecil's map maker in a Latin letter, Nowell produced for him a pocket map of the British Isles (BL, Add. MS 62540) on which he sketched images of himself and of Cecil. His other maps, except for four lost after Lambarde presented them to Nowell's friend Adrian Stokes in 1574, are at the British Library (Cotton MS Domitian xviii).

Cecil was also a close friend and patron of Nowell’s cousin, Robert Nowell (d. 6 February 1569), Attorney of the Court of Wards. See the History of Parliament entry for Robert Nowell at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/nowell-robert-1520-69>.

To the right honourable and his singular good master, Sir William Cecil, knight, the Queen's Majesty's Principal Secretary

I observe, most honoured Sir, that above all other monuments of the noble arts you take especial pleasure in geographical maps, and that you know how to make good use of them in your office to render unceasing service of all kinds to the state. Moreover, that those who have hitherto undertaken to describe the county (*provinciam*) of England have not in all respects satisfied you; nor certainly (let me speak frankly) have they deserved even moderate praise. And this is not to be wondered at, because without precise rule and without the support and judgment of any art, they have brought together in their maps certain imaginary locations and intervals of places, either by combining the reports of any others or by relying on the uncertain estimation of their own eyes. Wherefore, since I had no confidence in my own skill in work of this kind, albeit I thought myself fitted for many other offices, it has long been in my mind (as a means of serving my country in some fashion and of showing gratitude to you, to whom I owe so much) to offer my labour and industry in this business. I have refrained hitherto from doing so by consideration of those who have till now applied themselves to this work, for I apprehended that, if I put my hand into the harvest of others, I should have the harmful reputation of ambition with you; but most of all your censure deterred me, and I feared lest I seem to decline or neglect any task that you laid upon me. For since I see that whatever is worthy has hitherto been published with so much daily expectation, and I understand my work to have been not long since necessary to the Earl of Oxford, I trust in your wonted goodness and kindness to me, and have not hesitated to communicate this my purpose to you. I await your judgment and authority in the matter; for I am most ready to perform (to the best of my power) whatsoever you shall command in this or other things. For if I am freely permitted to do what I have in mind, there is nothing in all the affairs of the state, so far as I know, which I could more rightly accomplish than this, or which I would desire to undertake and to complete with more goodwill. I hope indeed (if your benevolence shines on me in this) to depict our country (*regionem*) both as a whole and in all its parts, and also the several counties (*provincias*) in such fashion that in this business no work hereafter will be a cause of greater labour or expense. It will stand in the royal records (if my hope does not fail) as a monument to your name not to be despised, which will endure, to the manifold use of those who come after you, so long as the empire and state of England shall last.

Farewell. . .
Laurence Nowell

Video te, vir honoratissime, cum caeteris omnibus honestarum artium monumentis, tum praecipue Geographicis tabellis mirum in modum delectari: quippe qui eum fructum inde capere noris, quo et quod tui muneris est rectius facis, et omnibus modis, reipub. prodesse nunquam desistis. Animadverti porro eos qui huc usque Angliae describendae provinciam suscipierunt, tibi usque quaque non satisfecisse: nec certe (dicam enim quod sentio) quicquid vel mediocri laude dignum praestitisse. Neque id adeo mirum, cum sine ulla certa regula, sine omni artis ope et iudicio, aut aliorum quorumcunque relationibus innixi, aut oculorum suorum incertae conjecturae confisi, imaginarios quosdam locorum situs et intervalla in chartas congesserint. Quocirca cum in istiusmodi opere meipsum nonnihil praestare posse non diffiderem, simulque quam essem aliis plerisque ministeriis parum idoneus mecum sepius cogitarem, fuit mihi jamdudum in animo (quo et patriae meae et reipub. aliqua saltem ratione utilis essem, et tibi, cui tantum debeo, gratum facere possem) in hoc negotio meam operam et industriam offerre. Quo minus vero id fecerim huc usque me detinuit eorum ratio qui jamdiu in hoc ipso agendo versati sunt: verebar enim ne dum in alienam messem manum immitterem, injuriosae cujusdam ambitionis opinionem apud te incurrerem; praecipue autem tua me censura deterruit: Valde etenim timebam ne quam mihi imposueras curam aut detrectare aut negligere viderei possem. Verum cum neque illos adhuc tanta et tam diuturna expectatione dignum quicquid edidisse videam: et meam operam haud fore diu Oxoniensi Comiti necessariam facile intelligam; tuae in me solitae bonitati et humanitati confisus, hujus mei animi te certiolem reddere non dubitavi. Qua quidem in re iudicium tuum et auctoritatem expecto: sum enim sive hoc sive aliud quodcunque jusseris (quoad sufficient vires) facere paratissimus. Verum enim vero si ingenue quid animi habeam fateri liceat, in omnibus reipublicae negotiis nihil quicquid est est, quod sciam, quod aut rectius quam hoc me perficere posse confidam, aut quod magis libenti animo faciendum et perficiendum suscipere cuperem. Spero profecto me (si modo tua in hac re mihi affulserit benevolentia) regionem nostrum non modo simul universam sed et partes ejus omnes, et singulas provincias ita depicturum ut posthac non erit opus in hoc negotium plus aut laboris aut sumptus conferre: Monumentumque adeo (si non me fallit spes) haud contemnendum tuo nomini dicatum in scriniis regiis relinquetur, eousque duraturum et tuis posteris multiplici usui futurum, dum steterit imperium et respublica Anglorum. Vale.

Famulus tuus tibi multis nominibus devinctissimus
Laurentius Nouellus

Endorsed: June 1563, Lawrence Nowell to my master, tutor to the young Earl of Oxford, proposing to frame an exact map of England.