

SUMMARY: The document below is a translation in the Calendar of State Papers Venetian of the report of an audience given by the authorities in Venice to the English ambassador, Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639), on 18 March 1618. During the audience the ambassador mentioned an incident involving Henry de Vere (1593-1625), 18th Earl of Oxford, who had been in a gondola with a courtesan during the Carnival, and whose servants and the courtesan had been arrested.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online, after the death of his mother in early 1613, Henry de Vere embarked upon an extended tour of Europe, remaining overseas for over five years, first in the Spanish Netherlands, then in France, and finally, in Venice. With King James' approval, Oxford offered to raise 6000 men for the Republic's service, an offer which the Venetian Senate declined. He returned to England in October 1618.

The arrest of the courtesan and of the 18th Earl's servants appears to have been a calculated insult, similar to the insult conveyed by the arrest of Sir Henry Wotton's steward while he was in the company of the 18th Earl's servants a few months later (see Hinds, Nos. 382, 392 and 400). These arrests may have been related to events in Venice in early 1618. See Ogilvie, James, trans., *The Civil History of the Kingdom of Naples by Pietro Giannone*, Vol. II, (London, 1731), pp. 719-20, available online at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=dG5UAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA720&lpg=PA720&dq=%22general+barbarigo%22&source=bl&ots=M8cO3UdARk&sig=cczNT1dj6R0yVhd_29Fyv_jGHrTk&hl=en&ei=smy5Toe-GoOeiQLqw_D9BA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CCUQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=%22general%20barbarigo%22&f=false.

The arrests may also have been related to the duel which had been fought between Sir John Vere and one Milander at Cortello near Udine on 23 March 1618. Sir John Vere had been imprisoned afterwards, and the matter was complicated by the fact that his second cousin, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, had come to Udine 'incognito last Carnival to fight as Vere's champion against any one who should take the part of Milander' (see Hinds, Nos. 297, 322).

There may also be a connection between the disturbances in Venice at the beginning of 1618 referenced on pp. 719-20 in Ogilvie's *Civil History* above, the arrests of the 18th Earl's servants and Wotton's steward, and statements made to the Inquisition at Venice on 28 and 31 December 1618 by Captain Baldassare Juven and Diana Palermitana (see Hinds, Nos. 672 and 677).

The Doge mentioned below was Giovanni Bembo (1543-1618), who died on 16 March 1618.

The transcript below is taken from Hinds, Allen Banks, ed., *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of*

Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy, Vol. XV, 1617-19 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909), p. 175. See also <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=88674>.

March 18
Collegio Secreta
Esposizioni Principi
Venetian Archives

282. The English ambassador came into the Cabinet and spoke as follows:

I beg first to offer my condolences upon the death of the Doge. One Angelo Scalion of Verona has besought me to intercede for his release from prison. He offered to communicate some secrets to me and sent me a paper. On reading it and seeing the depraved character of the man, I sent my secretary to see him in the prison. [The ambassador here sent for the secretary, who confirmed this.] The ambassador then said that instead of interceding for the man he would rather see him sent to the galleys forever.

He continued: The Earl of Oxford, Lord Chamberlain of Great Britain, happened during the Carnival to be in his gondola with a young courtesan, a thing permissible at such a time, and he did not know the laws. The young woman and his servants have been made prisoners. He is much distressed as he knows that they have done nothing wrong, and he begs for their release. I add my intercession to his.

The ambassador was told that the matter would be considered, and so he took leave.

The tenor of the paper is as follows:

A poison to kill every human creature by the smell, namely with a flower or a pair of gloves or a breath, or to speak of the poison will take effect, and the person will die without fail.

A preservative for the person who uses this poison so that he suffer no harm.

A poison to kill by touch, with a preservative for the user.

A safe invention for killing princes without poison, as they pass on horse or in their carriages, without any danger to the assassin.

A secret to compel love.

A mine to be applied to ships under water to make ships sink, and which may also be applied within fortresses or other places where there is water.

There are other secrets worthy of any prince.

[Italian]