

SUMMARY: The document below is a translation in the Calendar of State Papers Venetian of a report, dated 7 November 1618, by Antonio Foscarini to the Venetian authorities concerning two meetings between himself and the English ambassador in Venice, Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639). During the second of these meetings, the ambassador mentioned that Henry de Vere (1593-1625), 18th Earl of Oxford, intended to assume command of a terzo of infantry in the Low Countries, 'an unusual thing in an English noble'. The ambassador also mentioned the desire of the Earl's second cousin, Sir John Vere, to be made Colonel.

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. He returned to England in October 1618.

With King James' approval, he offered to raise 6000 men for the Republic's service, an offer which the Venetian Senate declined.

Sir John Vere was the illegitimate son of Oxford's first cousin, John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall. In his youth Sir John Vere had been a page to Prince Maurice of Nassau (1567-1625), and had served as Lieutenant to Count John Ernest (1582-1617) of Nassau in the Low Countries, and as a captain in Flanders for 20 years (see Hinds, Nos. 32, 196). It would appear from this passage in Foscarini's report that it was being suggested that Sir John Vere should be appointed Colonel by the Venetians in the stead of Count William (1592-1642) of Nassau, a younger brother of both the deceased Count John Ernest (1582-1617) of Nassau and Count John (1583-1638) of Nassau-Siegen:

Count William of Nassau is certainly of royal blood, and highly esteemed in the Low Countries, but at the death of Count John Ernest, when Count John, the brother of both, aspired to succeed him, the States refused, and appointed the Lieutenant.

For the will of Sir John Vere, dated 13 December 1630 and proved 14 November 1631, see TNA PROB 11/160, ff. 433-4. For other documents in the State Papers Venetian mentioning Sir John Vere, see Hinds, Nos. 73, 297, 322, 382 and 400.

Antonio Foscarini was the Venetian ambassador in England from 1611-15. After his return to Venice he was disgraced, but was now enjoying a brief period of public favour. He was executed in 1622. See Smith, Logan Pearsall, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, Vol. II, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 163-4.

The Doge of Venice at the time was Antonio Priuli (1548-1623), who held office from 17 May 1618 until his death on 12 August 1623.

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), pp. 343-8. See also <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=88686>.

November 7
Collegio, Secreta
Esposizioni Principi
Venetian Archives

579. Office passed by the Ambassador of England with the Cavalier Foscarini.

On Thursday last the English ambassador came to the house of me, Antonio Foscarini. I received him in accordance with the leave granted to me. He said first, If this office is late, it is very friendly, and he had expressed a desire for it by his secretary six weeks ago. He went on to say much about the good disposition of their Majesties towards me, of their pleasant memory of my service, and their sorrow for my troubles. He spoke very kindly of his satisfaction at my rehabilitation. He said a great deal more in my honour with expressions of great kindness which I need not repeat.

I thanked him for the honour he had shown me by coming, and said that but for our regulations I would have called immediately at his house as soon as the secretary mentioned the matter, as I would do now it was in my power. I was much indebted to his Majesty, of whose kind remembrance of me I had heard from the Ambassador Contarini in letters of the 24th August. I begged his Excellency to thank their Majesties.

The ambassador went on to speak of the excellent disposition of the King towards the Republic, and that of the Elector Palatine. He enlarged upon the Diet now being held by the Princes of the Union at Rotburgh, how they are daily augmenting their forces, that they only desire to protect themselves and maintain peace. He spoke of the ships obtained by your Excellencies from England, and of the ease with which they can be obtained in any quantity in case of need, as well as from the Low Countries. He said that experience showed that ships and men could be here in two months at latest.

He spoke of Colonel [Henry] Peyton, to whom your Excellencies have assigned 200 ducats a month, and of the desire of [Sir John] Vere to have the title of Colonel. He was quite satisfied about the first, because your Serenity had told him that no colonel received a larger salary. With regard to the latter, it was customary everywhere for the Lieutenant Colonel to succeed the Colonel in case of death. Count William of Nassau is certainly of royal blood, and highly esteemed in the Low Countries, but at the death of Count John Ernest, when Count John, the brother of both, aspired to succeed him, the States refused, and appointed the Lieutenant. I said that your Excellencies would do what you could to satisfy him about Vere, and that the sentiments of the Palatine and his Majesty towards the Republic were fully reciprocated here. With that the ambassador departed.

It seemed to me from the ambassador's manner that he performed this office by express command of the King. For some years the royal ambassadors in this city claim that they ought to be visited first by the ambassador of your Excellencies who return from the Courts. For this cause they occasionally have not paid visits, and that is the reason why I did not want to go and see him first, as I might have done owing to the leave given to me.

On Sunday I returned his Excellency's visit. He met me at the foot of the stairs, gave me his hand, and showed me every sort of honour. I passed the necessary compliments, and after he had replied he spoke of the time spent by him here, of various orders received from his Majesty by virtue of which he had frequently expressed to your Serenity his Majesty's desire to have a good understanding with the Republic. He had always received gracious replies to their advances. His Majesty's sentiments remain the same, and are even increased. I replied in a few complimentary phrases.

He afterwards spoke to me about the condition of the Low Countries, of the authority which M. d'Aerssens (Arsen) is acquiring there, who was ambassador in France in my time. He said that he would soon take the place which Barnevelt had held. That the Earl of Oxford, one of the leading nobles of England, had agreed to command a terzo of infantry in the Low Countries, an unusual thing in an English noble, as they generally live in their own country where they enjoy great consideration. He said the example might be followed by others. He spoke to me about various English gentlemen whom I knew, and of the changes which had taken place by death and by other circumstances in the government and council of state since my departure from England. After I had stayed as long as I thought proper I left, and was accompanied by his Excellency as far as the gondola. He seemed especially anxious that Vere should be satisfied. I told him that I would represent everything to your Serenity and your Excellencies.

[Italian]