

SUMMARY: The letter below was written on 5 September 1577 by the King of France, Henri III (1551-1589), to his ambassador in England, Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de Mauvissiere (c.1520-1592). In the first part of the letter the King voices his concern that the assurances Leicester has given Mauvissiere not be taken at face value, since it seems clear to the King Queen Elizabeth is still giving support to his Huguenot subjects who have risen up in arms against him. The King then refers to a proposal which Oxford had made to Mauvissiere on behalf of an English captain, which the King says is now not possible because Henri de Bourbon (1552-1588) Prince of Conde, has changed his mind about going to England. The nature of the plan is unclear. The King renews the instructions to Mauvissiere in his earlier letter of 12 July 1577 to preserve a good relationship with Oxford, and approves of the present Mauvissiere has given Oxford, promising again, as he had in a previous letter, to send Oxford a jewel as a token of his esteem. The transcript below is taken from Le Laboureur, Jean (1731), *Les Memoires de Messire Michel de Castelnau Seigneur de Mauvissiere*, 3 vols (Brussels), at vol.3, pp. 531-32.

Monsieur de Mauvissiere. Tout ce que je vous puis dire pour respondre à vos Dépêches des 9. 12. & 17. du passé & encore à celle du 17. escrite de vostre main, qui m'a esté rendue avec les autres depuis l'arrivée de vostre Secretaire Arnaud, est qu'il faut que vous ayez l'oeil soigneusement aux délibérations de la Reine d'Angleterre & ceux de son Conseil, se jugeant bien par le Memoire que vous m'avez envoyé, que quelque assurance que le Sr. Comte de Leicester s'efforce de vous imprimer de la ferme amitié de la Reine sa Maistresse en mon endroit, vous ne vous devez pas arrester à ces belles paroles, mais en vous montrant toûjours ferme & constant & poursuivant le langage que avez cy-devant tenu par-delà, suivant les Dépêches que je vous ay faites, penetrer en leurs délibérations, & sur tout empescher que mes Sujets évelez contre mon autorité, ne soient secourus & aidez d'argent pour lever Reistres, selon les menées & pratiques qui s'en font par-delà au préjudice de nostre commune amitié, laquelle doit estre inviolable; & tout ainsi que si ladite Dame Reine estoit en pareille peine que je suis, elle n'approuveroit pas que je supportasse ses Sujets en leur rebellion & désobéissance, aussi doit elle user du mesme respect envers moy, sans prester l'oreille & se laisser aller davantage aux passions de ceux qui la veulent mettre en un borbier, dont peut-estre elle seroit après bien empeschée à se tirer, pour ces raisons que je vous ay cy-devant escrites, lesquelles vous devez reiterer souvent, quand il viendra à propos à ladite Reine & à ceux de son Conseil, lorsque verrez qu'il se tramera quelque chose de nouveau au préjudice de mon service.

Et si on vous parloit encore de la Roche de Bretagne, vous direz comme la verité est telle, qu'il n'est point allé en Irlande & que je ne permettray à aucuns de mes Sujets de faire chose qui soit contre & au préjudice de nos Traitez.

Cependant je desire que vous entreteniez toûjours la conference que avez avec ledit Sr. Comte de Leicester, avec assurance que continuant les bons offices, que j'ay vû par vosdites Dépêches qu'il fait pour lever toute la défiance qui est entre nous, & nous

entretenir en la sincere amitié que nous nous sommes jurée & promise l'un à l'autre, je n'oublieray pas cette bonne volonté, ains en auray souvenance, l'occasion se presentant, & en direz le semblable au Milord Honston & aux autres, qui desirent la conservation de nostre amitié, desirant aussi que preniez soigneusement garde à ce qui se fera par-delà en faveur du Prince d'Orange & de ceux des Estats, à ce que Mesbil a negocié en Allemagne, & autres choses qui dépendent de l'intelligence, qui est à present entre ladite Reine d'Angleterre & ledit Prince d'Orange, pour m'en donner advis, ensemble des autres occasions que verrez le meriter, pour lesquelles découvrir, soit par le moyen du personnage que sçavez, ou tel autre que vous adviserez, il ne faut plaindre quelque argent, que je m'asseure que sçavez bien employer & je vous en feray rembourser, ensemble des autres frais que vous avez dés-ja faits pour mon service, comme il est bien raisonnable.

Quant à ce que vous à proposé le jeune Comte d'Oxford de la part d'un Capitaine Anglois, c'est chose qui ne se pourroit maintenant, ayant mondit cousin le Prince de Condé changé de délibération d'aller en Angleterre. Mais s'il reprenoit son opinion, je ne voudrois pas que ledit Capitaine executast son entreprise s'avoüant de moy, ains de luy mesme; afin d'oster toute occasion de soupçon & défiance à ladite Reine d'Angleterre, ainsi que vous pourrez faire entendre audit jeune Sr. Comte d'Oxford, lequel je vous prie d'entretenir toujours en la bonne affection qu'il me porte. Je suis bien aise du present que vous luy avez fait, aussi vous enverray-je bien-tost une bague pour luy.

Cependant je vous diray que j'espere avec l'aide de Dieu avoir bien-tost la paix en mon Royaume, estans la plûpart des articles résolus & mes Députez en chemin pour aller trouver le Roy de Navarre mon frere, afin de convenir avec luy & les Députez de ceux de la nouvelle opinion de ce qui reste à faire en cela, dont je vous advertiray plus amplement par vostre Secretaire que je vous renvoyeray aussi-tost que celuy que je vous envoyay dernièrement, sera de retour. Priant Dieu, &c. Escrit à Poitiers le 5. jour de Septembre 1577.

Monsieur de Mauvissiere. All that I can say in answer to your dispatches of the 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> past, and also to that of the 17<sup>th</sup> written in your hand, which has been delivered to me with the others since the arrival of your secretary, Arnaud, is that it is necessary that you have a careful eye to the deliberations of the Queen of England & those of her Council, yourself well judging by the memorandum which you sent me that, whatever assurance the Earl of Leicester attempts to impress on you concerning the firm amity of the Queen his Mistress in my domain, you ought not to stay yourself at those fine words, but showing yourself always firm & constant in the matter, & pursuing the language that you have heretofore maintained over there, following the dispatches that I have made you, to penetrate their deliberations concerning it, and above all to prevent that my subjects, raised against my authority, not be succoured & aided with money to levy reiters [=German cavalry soldiers] according to the intrigues & practices which they carry out over there to the prejudice of our common amity, which ought to be inviolable, & just as if the said Lady Queen were in the same difficulty that I am, she would not approve

that I would support her subjects in their rebellion & disobedience, she ought also to use the same respect towards me, without lending her ear & letting herself be carried more with the passions of those who wish to put her in a mire, from which perhaps she might later be well prevented from pulling herself for those reasons that I have written to you before, which, when it appears convenient, you ought to reiterate often to the said Queen & to those of her Council when you see that something new is plotted to the prejudice of my service.

And if anyone speaks to you again of La Roche of Brittany, you will say, as the truth is such, that he has not gone into Ireland at all, & that I will not permit any of my subject to do anything which would be against & to the prejudice of our treaties.

Nevertheless, I desire that you maintain always the conference which you have with the said Earl of Leicester, with assurance that, continuing the good offices which I have seen by your said dispatches that he does to remove all the distrust which is between us, & to preserve us in the sincere amity which we have sworn & promised the one to the other, I will not forget that goodwill, but rather I will have remembrance of it, the occasion presenting itself, & you will say the same thing to my Lord Hunsdon & to the others who desire the preservation of our amity, desiring also that you will take great care of that which comes about over there in favour of the Prince of Orange & of those of the Estates, of that which Mesbil has negotiated in Germany, & other things which depend on the communication which there is at present between the said Queen of England & the said Prince of Orange, in order to give me advertisement, together with other occasions which you will see merit it, to discover which, be it by the means of the personage whom you know or such other whom you will advise, it is not necessary to be sparing of money, which I assure myself that you well know how to employ, & I will reimburse you for it, together with the other charges which you have already incurred for my service, as is very reasonable.

As for that which the young Earl of Oxford has offered you on the behalf of an English captain, it is a thing which would not be possible now, my said cousin the Prince of Conde having altered his decision to go into England. But if he were to renew his opinion, I would not wish that the said captain would execute his enterprise avowing himself of me, but rather of himself, in order to take away all occasion of suspicion & distrust from the said Queen of England; also that you will be able to make that understood to the said young Earl of Oxford, whom I pray you to preserve always in the good affection which he bears me. I am well pleased with the present which you have made him; also I will send you soon a jewel for him.

Nonetheless, I will say to you that I hope with the help of God soon to have peace in my realm, most of the articles being resolved, & my deputies on the way to go to find the King of Navarre, my brother, in order to agree with him & the deputies of those of the new opinion concerning that which remains to be done, of which I will advertise you more fully by your secretary whom I will send back to you as soon as he whom I last sent you will be returned. Praying God, etc. Written at Poitiers the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1577.