

SUMMARY: The document below is an excerpt from the *Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae* by Robert Wingfield of Brantham describing the circumstances under which Oxford's father, the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl, was persuaded to defect from the forces of Leicester's father, John, Duke of Northumberland, and support the accession of Queen Mary. It is taken from MacCulloch, Diarmaid (ed. & trans.). *The Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae* of Robert Wingfield of Brantham'. In Anon., Camden miscellany, 28 (Camden, 4th ser., 29; Camden miscellany, 28) (London: Royal Historical Society, 1984), 181-301, at pp. 263-4, 266.

One of Queen Mary's earliest supporters was Sir Henry Jerningham (d. 6 September 1572), nephew of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford's widow, Elizabeth de Vere, Countess of Oxford. For the will of Sir Henry Jerningham, see TNA PROB 11/55/240. For the will of Elizabeth de Vere, Countess of Oxford, see TNA PROB 11/27/144.

Another early supporter of Queen Mary was John de Vere (d. 3 August 1562), 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. His defection to Queen Mary is generally said to have been the decisive turning-point in Northumberland's attempt to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne. See Whitelock, Anna, *Mary Tudor*, (New York: Random House, 2009), p. 196 at:

[https://books.google.ca/books?id=viQHNkMScFoC&pg=PA194&lpg=PA194&dq=%22Mary+Tudor%22+%22Earl+of+Oxford%22+%22Henry+Jerningham%22&source=bl&ots=tfcMG8IhkA&sig=rbRXLwi0O44P-rwd-9qD8W\\_CqCE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=m45LVbuKHMPfoATLm4DwBA&ved=0CDIQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=%22Mary%20Tudor%22%20%22Earl%20of%20Oxford%22%20%22Henry%20Jerningham%22&f=false](https://books.google.ca/books?id=viQHNkMScFoC&pg=PA194&lpg=PA194&dq=%22Mary+Tudor%22+%22Earl+of+Oxford%22+%22Henry+Jerningham%22&source=bl&ots=tfcMG8IhkA&sig=rbRXLwi0O44P-rwd-9qD8W_CqCE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=m45LVbuKHMPfoATLm4DwBA&ved=0CDIQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=%22Mary%20Tudor%22%20%22Earl%20of%20Oxford%22%20%22Henry%20Jerningham%22&f=false)

Northumberland was executed on 22 August 1553. Among his sons, according to the *ODNB*, Sir Robert Dudley, the future Earl of Leicester, played the largest role in his family's attempt to bar Queen Mary's accession:

*Dudley played a larger role than did his brothers in the disaster that overwhelmed his family in July 1553. Immediately after Edward died on 6 July, Northumberland sent Dudley to Hunsdon, Hertfordshire, to bring Princess Mary to court. Forewarned, however, she had already left for Kenninghall. He followed her into Norfolk, but outnumbered by her supporters retired to King's Lynn, which he held until his father surrendered at Cambridge on 20 July. He was brought to the Tower of London on 26 July, the day after his brothers. His trial posed an awkward legal problem because Mary's privy council had determined that the primary act of treason was appearing in arms with Northumberland at Cambridge on 16–17 July. Dudley had to be tried on a separate charge of treason for having proclaimed Lady Jane Grey at King's Lynn on 18 July. Because a Norfolk jury had to be empanelled first, he was not in fact arraigned until 22 January 1554, the eve of the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt the younger. Although he admitted guilt on the following day and was condemned, he was not attainted until the second parliament of 1554, along with the Wyatt rebels—by which time he had actually been released. Moreover Dudley had an unused defence: like many others who had also*

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*proclaimed Jane, he had simply carried out the orders of the privy council. In 1571 he sought and obtained a reversal of the attainder in the court of king's bench.*

Given this background, it is not unreasonable to suspect that Leicester felt considerable animosity towards the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl, and that the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl's confidence in Leicester, as evidenced by documents signed by the Earl just prior to his death on 3 August 1562, was very much misplaced.

Thus very soon, while he was setting out for Bury, he was brought certain news by Henry Gate, John Gate's brother, who had just escaped from prison, together with Thomas Golding, brother to the Countess of Oxford, that the earl himself had deserted Northumberland's party, mainly through the efforts of his menial household servants. Some attribute Oxford's adherence to Mary to the agency of Sir John Wentworth, the earl's cousin, and a man of noble stock and reliable character; others, whose account I prefer, find the explanation of the earl's defection elsewhere. Therefore I will rehearse the drama from the beginning, and thus it happened.

Clement Tusser, a lawyer, and a truly courageous character, was being kept prisoner at Hedingham castle, the earl's most delightful home set on the hill above the town which derives its name from the castle, for no other reason than that he had publicly proclaimed Mary as the only undoubted heir to the throne. This man was such a partisan of Queen Mary that he would rather have taken his own life than support another claimant. And since he was, as the comic poet puts it, a man well-disposed at all times, he was treated with great kindness especially by the menial servants; he fully convinced them that it was their duty to urge the earl to espouse and embrace Mary's cause with all his might. This daring man spoke thus and in similar vein, adding the proverbial spur to the horse, and fuel to the fire; for these menial servants were loyal enough to Mary as their queen to make the voice of the common people heard.

At that time Henry Gate and Robert Stafford came from Northumberland to the earl, Stafford being designated captain of the earl of Oxford's contingent because of his courage and military skill. According to their instructions these men were trying every means and thinking of every argument to bring Oxford into their ranks. However, when Tusser saw this he once more fiercely urged the servants to encourage and force their master to obey Queen Mary. Manfully and zealously doing their duty on Tusser's initiative, they crowded into the ample space of the castle hall and sent up deafening shouts that they recognized no other Queen but Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry VIII; if their lord was willing to join her party, they were ready to give their lives in this most just cause, but on the other hand, if their lord did not wish to give his backing to this cause, the most righteous of any, they threatened immediately to throw off their liveries and set out for Princess Mary.

The earl professed himself much moved by their words and gave his agreement to his menial servants, asking for their help against the gentlemen who were doing everything

they could to oppose this move. The earl had at that time a hundred common servants remarkable for their stature and strength, and they were quick to aid their master; they fell on the gentlemen, and on the earl's orders they threw the most important into gaol. Those imprisoned included Sir Robert Stafford, Sir Henry Gate, Sir Thomas Golding, Thomas Tey, Thomas Almot, Henry Golding, Thomas's brother, and John Turner. After this, the earl, accompanied by Tusser, whom he had just restored to liberty, and the rest of his household, made for Framlingham, and his defection from Northumberland was a severe blow to the morale of that party. And so we have the denouement of our little drama.

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However, in paying so much attention to the fugitives I have nearly forgotten the two noblemen who arrived that same day to aid the queen; first was John Vere, earl of Oxford, with a large force of men whom he had quickly been able to gather at the moment of his desertion of the duke, already mentioned; he was followed after a short interval by Richard, Lord Rich, with a goodly company.

Propediem enim ad Buriam proficisenti pro certo allatum erat per Henricum Gatum, Iohannis fratrem nuperimme elapsam carcere, cum Thoma Goldingo comitissae fratre ipsum Oxoniensem eius partes deseruisse opera in primis famulorum plebeiorum. Hanc Oxoniensis ad Mariam profectionem alii Iohanni Wentworth, equiti, comitis consanguineo, viro nobili prosapia, et moribus gravissimis tribuunt: alii (quibus magis accedo) aliunde huius comitis defectionem tradunt ortam. Igitur tragaedia ab ipsis primordiis repetam, sic se habet.

Clemens Tusserus leguleius, vir hercule animosus satis, per idem temporis captivus servabatur apud Heddingham castellum, aedes quidem perpulcras comitis positas super oppidum, in pede collis, ab ipso castro nomen adeptum, non ulla de cause nisi quia propalam vulgasset Mariam unicam et veram regni heredem. Hic vir reginae Mariae adeo erat addictus, ut voluntariam appetere mortem maluerit, quam factioni alteri se adiungere. Et quia homo erat (sicut ait comicus) omnium horarum, magna cum humanitate a plebeis praesertim famulis tractabatur; quibus pro virili parte persuasit vehementer, ad comitem suis acriter incitandum verbis, omni conatu Mariae causam fovere, et amplecti. Hiis et similiter verbis usus est homo audens, addito (ut aiunt) currenti calcare, vel oleo camino: suapte enim satis reginae Mariae favebant isti famuli plebei ut inferius dicitur.

Per eos dies venere ab Northumbro ad comitem Henricus Gatus, et Robertus Staffordus, his propter audaciam, et militarem peritiam destinatus fuit praefectus cohorti Oxoniensi. Praefati hii viri, iuxta suum mandatum, vias omnes tentant, nihil inexcogitatum relinquentes, ad alliciendum Oxoniensem in suas partes. Quod quidem videns Tusserus, famulos denuo est hortatus acriter, ut dominum incitent, et urgeant reginae Mariae parere. Illi viriliter, et non segniter ex praefati Tusseri incitamento suum praestantes officium,

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sese conglobant in aula castelli huius hominum satis capaci, voce sonora clamantes, eos non aliam reginam cognoscere, praeter Mariam Henrici octavi maximam natu filiam: cuius partes si suos sequi velit dominus, se paratissimos in hac iustissima causa vitae dispendium facere: et ex adversa parte, si suus dominus huic causae (qua nulla iustior esse potest), non animum applicaverit: sese statim, obiectis famularibus tunicis, ad Mariam principem abituros minantur.

Eorum vocibus comes maxime (sicut dicebat) instigatus, plebeis famulis praebet assensum, eorum opem implorans adversum nobiles, qui eum summo studio remorari nitebantur. Centum habuit illo tempore comes famulos plebeios, proceritate corporis, et viribus conspicuos, qui celeriter suo domino opem ferentes, adoriuntur nobilitatem, et eorum praecipuos in carcerem cito coniiciunt, illud comite iubente. Incarceratorum nomina haec fere erant Robertus Staffordus, Henricus Gatus, Thomas Goldingus equites, Thomas Teius, Thomas Almotus, Henricus Goldingus, Thomae frater, Iohannes Turnerus. Hiis vero gestis comes cum Tussero, recens ab eo libertate donato, et reliquo famulatu Framlinghamiam versus se accingit: cuius ab Northumbro defectio, alteri factioni magnam attulit desperationem. Et haec huius tragediae catastrophe.

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At mihi adeo multum inter fugitivos versanti, prope obrepsit oblivio duorum heroum, qui eo ipso die venerunt ad reginam suppetias afferentes: quorum prior Iohannes Vereus Oxoniae comes cum maxima manu hominum quos raptim eo memoratae defectionis suae a duce momento colligere potuit: quem paulo post est secutus Richardus Richeus regulus satis bene comitatus.