

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Ralph Winwood dated 9 January 1613 in which he mentions the death of Oxford's widow, Elizabeth Trentham, Dowager Countess of Oxford, who had been buried on 3 January. Chamberlain reports that the Countess had died 'of this new disease', and that her legacies exceeded the assets she had left to her son Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford. See Winwood, Ralph, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Q. Elizabeth and K. James I*, (London: T. Ward, 1725), Vol. III, pp. 421-2 at:

<https://archive.org/details/memorialsaffai03winw/page/422/mode/2up>

The transcript below is taken from McClure, Norman Egbert, ed., *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939), Vol. I, pp. 402-6.

My very gentle Lord,

The holidays are come and gone, and nothing yet done of that which was so duly expected, I mean the translating and creating of new officers. The King was moved by the Council in this matter, specially for secretaries, for that the state of affairs required it, and suffered much for the want of a sufficient man that might ease and help to disburden his Majesty in the care and pains of that place, wherefore they besought him to provide and name whomsoever he pleased. He took their advice in good part, and promised to resolve in good time, and further that when he did it he would perfect it, which later clause I take for *bonum omen*, and apply it to the person I wish best to. The world conceives the King hath no great inclination of himself to Sir H[enry] N[eville], so that if he prevail it must be, as it were, *invita Minerva*, and by the importunity of his great patron, and then to counterpoise the balance and please the counterpart, Sir Thomas Lake may be admitted, or rather (as the voice goes now) Sir Thomas Edmondes, who besides his own friends at home hath the Duke of Bouillon an earnest solicitor in his behalf.

At the solemnizing of the fiancailles on St. John's day, Sir Thomas Lake's friends made account he had won ground and outstepped his competitors in performing the part of a principal secretary when he did *proeire conceptis verbis* and repeat the words of the contract, which were so badly translated and worse pronounced that it moved an unseasonable laughter as well in the contractors as the assistants, till the Archbishop of Canterbury, very gravely interposing himself, used these very words: The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless these nuptials, and make them prosperous to these kingdoms and to his church. You are exceedingly beholden to that prelate for his good word and opinion, which he hath not spared to make known upon divers occasions. The Prince Palatine (for so he is now styled, and since this contract is usually prayed for in the church among the King's children) was very royal in his presents this New-year's tide, giving to the Lord and Lady Harington in golden and gilt plate to the value of £2000, to their servants £400, to all the women about the Lady Elizabeth £100 apiece and a

medaglia with his picture, to her waiters as much, and to her chief gentleman-usher a chain of £150, to Mistress Dudley a chain of pearl and diamonds of £500, to the Prince a rapier and pair of spurs set with diamonds, to the King a bottle of one entire agate containing two quarts esteemed a very rare and rich jewel, to the Queen a very fair cup of agate and a jewel, and lastly, to his mistress, a rich chain of diamonds, a tire for her head all of diamonds, two very rich pendent diamonds for her ears, and above all two pearls for bigness, fashion and beauty esteemed the rarest that are to be found in Christendom, insomuch that the jewels bestowed only on her are valued by men of skill above £35,000. He was purposed to show the like bounty towards the King and Queen's servants and officers, but the King directly forbade it. The Queen is noted to have given no great grace nor favour to this match, and there is doubt will do less hereafter, for that upon these frowns Schomberg (that is chief about him) is said to have given out that his master is a better man than the King of Denmark, and that he is to take place of him in the empire, at leastwise of a greater king than he, the King of Boheme. The marriage is set down for Shrove Sunday, against which time it is said the lords and ladies about the court have appointed a masque upon their own charge, but I hear there is order given for £1500 to provide one upon the King's cost, and £1000 for fireworks. The Inns of Court likewise are dealt with for two masques against that time, and mean to furnish themselves for the service. The Prince Palatine makes account to depart homeward some fifteen days after his marriage, and the Lady is to follow toward Whitsuntide, conducted by four earls, eight barons, and I know not how many knights. The old Lord Admiral means to make it his last service to waft her over.

The king removes this day toward Royston, where the Lord of Rochester shall have more leisure and commodity to negotiate this business that entertains every man's thoughts, for he pretends that the multiplicity of other affairs hindered him from moving it whiles the King was here, yet I will not forbear to tell you that many are of opinion that he is and will be content to keep it in his own hands. Indeed he is very slow of dispatch, and hath at this time many irons in the fire as well for himself as his friends, for besides the main place he shoots at, he is now about the reversion of the Lord Darcy's lands, which for want of heirs males are like to return to the crown according to the first grant.

A day or two before Christmas the King himself gave a hearing to a controversy twixt the farmers of the customs and Sir John Swinnerton, now Lord Mayor, who accused them of defrauding the King yearly of £70,000, but when it came to proof it could not be made good, so that they went away acquitted, and he not much condemned for seeking the King's benefit.

We have here daily many bankrupts, and as many protections which do marvellously hinder all manner of commerce.

The last week here came an ambassador from Lorraine to condole the Prince's death, and some say to propound I know not what match. He was a very proper man, son (as is said) to the Cardinal of Guise that was strangled at Blois, and in great favour or (as they term him) the Lerma of the Duke of Lorraine. Here is likewise a gentleman from the Duke of Guise, and another from the Prince Conti for the same effect. The late Prince's

household brake up the last of December, and his servants sent to seek their fortune. The inventory of his moveables doth far exceed his debts, and the account of his yearly revenues riseth to £57,000.

The Countess of Oxford is dead of this new disease, and left her son toward £1500 land and all her jewels and stuff on condition he pay her legacies, which rise to £2000, and bestow £500 on a tomb for his father and her. It may be you have heard that Sir George Fermor died above a month since, as likewise Sir John Norris of Berkshire, who left Sir Henry Neville and Sir William Bowyer his executors, but his daughter, the Lady Fenton, hath put herself in possession, and means to carry it away by strong hand. The Lady Webb (Sir Rowland Lytton's daughter), a very proper young gentlewoman, died here in town this Christmas of the smallpox. The Lord Evers is newly married to the Lady Hunsdon, Sir Richard Spencer's sister. There is a quarrel fallen out twixt Edward Sackville, son to the last Earl of Dorset, and the Lord Bruce of Kinloss, which was to be determined beyond sea. Sackville got over, but the Lord Bruce was stayed at Dover, where we hear these late winds and tempests have done great harm, and in a manner ruined and defaced the pier or haven. I grow now doubtful of Sir Thomas Bodley's recovery, and though I have not much misliked him, and thought it was but a lingering indisposition that had many *intervalla* and shows of reviving, and believe he hath had what help physic, good order, attendance, and all a good heart could afford, and yet methinks of late he droops and decays visibly, though he will not seem to yield to it. I meet your brother Pottman there much, who hath so many good words and assured promises from him that he is loath to have him moved lest he should pick a quarrel and find fault that he is mistrusted. There was a plot to have had him urged to the point by Matthew Small, but upon these and the like considerations it was let alone. For my part I am not of opinion that he will do any great matter for him, but there is no means to mend it, for he is very wilful, and grown exceeding testy and wayward upon every trifle and light occasion, so that (as the case stands) a man may soon do hurt in seeking to do good.

So with the remembrance of my best service to my good Lady, I commend you and all yours to the protection of the Almighty. From London this 9th of January 1612.

Your Lordship's to command,

John Chamberlain

To the right honourable Sir Ralph Winwood, knight, Lord Ambassador for his Majesty to the States of the United Provinces at the Hague