

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 12 July 1581 in which Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590) advises Lord Burghley that the Queen has decided not to restore Oxford to his full liberty unless he reconciles with his wife, Anne Cecil, from whom he had been estranged since his return in April 1576 from a continental tour. A note in Lord Burghley's hand in the left margin ('This is more easier to be done than courtiers do think') suggests that, contrary to appearances, Oxford was ready to reconcile with Anne. Walsingham also advises Lord Burghley that Sir Christopher Hatton ('Mr Vice-chamberlain') 'did very honourably acquit himself towards you' in discussing the matter with the Queen. For a letter from Lord Burghley expressing his thanks to Hatton, see BL MS Add. 15891, f. 77.

The cause of the Queen's imprisonment of Oxford in the Tower, and her later confinement of Oxford to house arrest, was the birth on 21 March 1581 of his illegitimate son, Edward Vere, by one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, Anne Vavasour. See Sir Francis Walsingham's letter of 23 March 1581 advising that the Queen was 'greatly grieved' by the incident, Huntingdon Library HA 13066.

For a letter from Oxford to Lord Burghley mentioning the message he has received from the Queen through Sir Francis Walsingham that 'she would have heard the matter again touching Henry Howard, Southwell and Arundel', see BL Lansdowne 33/6, ff. 12-13. For Oxford's denunciation of Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel to the Queen in late December 1580, and their libellous allegations against Oxford, see TNA SP 12/151/49, f. 109 and other documents on this website.

My very good Lord, I had thought to have taken some time this afternoon to have seen your Lordship, and to have acquainted you with my proceeding with the Earl of Oxford, but by reason of a quarrel fallen out between the Earl of Sussex and the Earl of Leicester, which her Majesty seeketh to take up in respect of the inconvenience that may fall out thereby, I am stayed by her Highness' commandment. The cause of the quarrel grew about Havering. The words of reproach that passed between them in the privy chamber were very bitter, but in whom the fault was it is very hard to judge for that there was no witnesses of that which passed between them. They are both far out of tune, and therefore are commanded both to keep their chambers until her Majesty take some further order between them. I see them both so far from any disposition of agreement as I see no way to appease them. Her Majesty is resolved, in case they shall not yield, to stand to her order to commit them both, which message the Earl of Bedford and I am commanded to deliver unto them both from her Majesty. As this cause shall receive further proceeding, so will I not fail to advertise your Lordship.

LM: This is more easier to be done that courtiers do think.

Her Majesty is resolved (upon some persuasion used) not to restore the Earl of Oxford to his full liberty before he hath been dealt withal for his wife. Mr. Vice-chamberlain, the

day he returned from your Lordship, did very honourably acquit himself towards you in that way. And so in haste I most humbly take my leave. At the court the 12th of July, 1581.

Your Lordship's to command,
Francis Walsingham

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England; (2) 12 Julij 1581; Mr. Secretary Walsingham, Earl Oxford, Earls Sussex, Leicester