

SUMMARY: The document below contains miscellaneous allegations against Oxford in Charles Arundel's hand.

In the first paragraph, the words 'her Majesty' and 'her person' have been changed by Arundel to 'your Majesty' and 'your person', indicating that in the first instance the document was not intended as a personal letter to the Queen but that Arundel later changed his mind, perhaps because Lord Henry Howard had written personally to the Queen.

In the document Arundel makes reference to 'the interrogatories last ministered unto me', an allusion to the notes which Oxford had prepared in January 1581 (see SP 12/151/42, ff. 96-96v), which dates this document to about that time. The charges Arundel levels at Oxford suggest that he was both a literalist and lacking in common sense. Although it may well have been true that Oxford spun tall tales for the amusement of his listeners, and like the Queen's drunken jester, John Pace, spared no-one in his railing while in his cups, this must already have been well known to everyone at court. If Arundel expected that Oxford's tall tales and railing would be taken literally, and treated as 'crimes' by the Queen, he was greatly mistaken. They were not. Although Oxford was arrested several months later, in late March 1581, it was for having tried to flee the county to escape imprisonment by the Queen when Anne Vavasour gave birth to his illegitimate son on 21 March 1581.

Arundel's charge of sodomy against Oxford was potentially more serious, but the 'proofs' Arundel offered were seriously deficient, indeed in some instances farcical, as when Arundel reports running around to the back door of Oxford's house in Broad Street to see his cook emerge 'all in a sweat'. Although Arundel claims that 'my Lord Harry saw more, and the boy confessed it unto Southwell', Lord Henry Howard declined to confirm Arundel's allegation, and Southwell denied it. One suspects that Arundel's belief that Oxford was guilty of sodomy was based on Oxford's own tall tales ('as also by his own confession too often to myself and others'). It seems likely that Oxford enjoyed baiting the prudish and easily-shocked Arundel with lurid stories of sexual liaisons.

Similarly, no-one corroborated Arundel's claims about Oxford's 'hired murders', which is not surprising since alleged victims such as Faunt, Cheke, Sidney, Raleigh and Leicester were all still alive. It would appear that Arundel's principal objective in making these miscellaneous allegations, despite the fact that they either did not qualify as crimes, or if they did, that there was no evidence to serve as proof that a crime had indeed been committed, was to attack Oxford's credibility, as Arundel admits in a marginal note, so that Oxford's own allegations against Arundel and Lord Henry Howard would be the less likely to be believed. As an interesting aside, Arundel mentions Oxford's familiarity with Caesar's *Commentaries*.

The credibility of the extensive allegations made by Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard against Oxford must be carefully weighed. On the evidence of the Spanish ambassador in England, Don Bernardino de Mendoza, Howard acted as a spy for Spain

from the night of 25 December 1580 on (see Archivo General de Simancas Leg. 835, ff. 121-4 and other documents on this website). Moreover Mendoza himself suggested that one of the reasons for both Henry Howard and Charles Arundel's flight from court on the night of 25 December 1580 was fear of arrest because of 'their having been very intimate with the French ambassador' (see Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, f. 6). After he fled England in December 1583, Charles Arundel acted as a spy for both Spain and France (see Paris Archives K.1564.218 and other documents on this website), and was declared guilty of high treason in England (see Paris Archives K.1563.122). Lord Henry Howard was named in a letter of Mendoza's as one of the principals involved in the Babington (see Paris Archives K.1564.150). When all these facts are considered, it is evident that both Howard and Arundel might have had much to hide when they fled the court on the night of 25 December 1580 for fear of arrest, and that the flood of allegations they unleashed against Oxford, whom they wrongly considered had reported their doings to the Queen, was designed to discredit him as a witness by bringing his character into such disrepute that anything he might say against them would be viewed with suspicion. In the end, the strategy was successful, and both Howard and Arundel were eventually released.

#### A true declaration of the Earl of Oxford's detestable vices and unpure life

To report at large all the vices of this monstrous Earl were a labour without end because they are so many, so vile, and so scandalous that it should be shame to write them and lost time to read them; of many I will write a few, but those most probable against him, as by the testimony of some very honourable and of divers very honest shall plainly appear, and to the end that all men may see, and that your Majesty may rightly conceive how unfit he is to be about your person, I will truly decipher him to the world and lay all his villainies to open gaze, for concealment whereof myself with others am justly punished.

LM: And as fit to be touched to weaken his testimony, which here I omit for brevity's sake

And first will I detect him of the most impudent and senseless lies that ever passed the mouth of any man, which as heretofore they have made much sport to the hearers, so are they now turned to the prejudice of divers. Of a million at the least that hath passed his tongue I will only speak of three, in affirmation of which lies, being void of sense and without colour of truth, to have them believed he hath perjured himself a hundred times and damned himself to the pit of hell, a vice not inferior to many that him attend.

And leaving all his circumstances, this is the first lie. At his being in Flanders, the Duke of Alva, as he will constantly affirm, grew so much to affect him for those rare parts he saw in him as he made him his lieutenant-general over all the army then in the Low Country, and employed him further in a notable piece of service where, according to his place, he commanded and directed the ambassador of Spain that is now here, Mondragon, Sancho D'Avila and the rest of the captains, but these whom I have named, as he will

say, of all others were most glad to be commanded by him, and so valiantly he behaved himself as he gained great love of all the soldiers, and no less admiration of his valure of all sorts.

And in this journey he passed many straits and divers bridges kept by the enemy, which he beat them from with the loss of many a man's life, but still he forced them to retire till at the last he approached the place that he went to besiege, and using no delay the cannon was planted, and the battery continued the space of ten days, by which time he had made such a breach as by a general consent of all his captains he gave an assault, and to encourage his soldiers, this valiant prince led them thereto, and through the force of his murdering arm many were sore wounded, but more killed.

Notwithstanding, being not well followed by the roiters, he was repulsed, but determining to give a fresh and general assault the next day, Mr. Bedingfield, as the devil would have it, came in upon his post-horse and called him from this service by her Majesty's letters, being the greatest disgrace that ever any such general received, and now the question is whether this noble general were more troubled with his calling home, or Bedingfield more moved with pity and compassion to behold this slaughter, or his horse more afeard when he passed the bridges at sight of the dead bodies, whereat he started and flung in such sort as Bedingfield could hardly keep his back.

Whether this hath passed him I leave it to the report of my Lord Charles Howard, my Lord Windsor, my Lord Compton, my Lord Harry Howard and my Lord Thomas Howard, Raleigh, Gorges, Gifford, Waldose [=Woodhouse?], Noel and Southwell, with divers other gentlemen that hath accompanied him. And if in his soberest moods he would own this, it may easily be gathered what will pass him in his cups.

Not much unlike to the lie that went before, I have heard him often tell, and as often heard it affirmed by his own knaves when he call them for witness, that at his being in Italy there fell discord and dissension in the city of Genoa between two families, whereupon it grew to wars, and great aid and assistance given to either party. And that for the fame that ran through Italy of his service done in the Low Countries under the Duke of Alva, he was chosen and made general of thirty thousand that the Pope sent to the aid of one party, and that in this action he showed so great discretion and government as by his wisdom the matters were compounded and an accord made, being more for his glory than if he had fought the battle. This lie is very rife with him, and in it he glories greatly; diversly hath he told it, and when he enters into it he can hardly out, which hath made such sport as often have I been driven to rise from his table laughing. So hath my Lord Charles Howard and the rest whom I named before, and for the proof of this I take them all as witnesses.

His third lie, which hath some affinity with the other two, is of certain excellent orations he made, as namely to the state of Venice, at Padua, at Bologna and divers other places in Italy, and one, which pleased himself above the rest, to his army when he marched towards Genoa, which, when he had pronounced it, he left nothing to reply, but everyone to wonder at his judgment, being reputed for his eloquence another Cicero and for his

conduct a Caesar, and for his senseless lies, as I will avow, both a fool and a knave. But when this is told, up starts a knave with three long legs and tells him his Honour said true. Thus much for his lies, the least of which will gain a whetstone.

The second vice wherewith I mean to touch him, though in the first I have included perjury in soothing, is that he is a most notorious drunkard, and very seldom sober, in which fits those that I have named, if they would be brought to speak, and such as have been most in his company, can well tell what he speaketh.

And whereas this monster hath, as it appeareth upon the interrogatories last ministered unto me, turned over his own vile speeches as well against Monsieur as others, I require no more for my acquittal but that my Lord Harry, Southwell and Raleigh may be asked who it was that, being as drunk as a beggar in his chamber at Greenwich, added further unto those speeches that he found it true that Caesar had written of the French in his *Commentaries*, and how God was fallen into a strange vein of crowning none but coxcombs.

Of these and suchlike, yea, and of worse, will I speak more of at another time. Only thus I say, that in his drunken fits he is no man, but a beast dispossessed of all temperance, modesty and reason, and runs as one possessed with a wicked spright into all acts of cruelty, injury and villainy. And if I accounted otherwise of him than of John Passe [=Pace], to whom I have most aptly often compared him, I could not with duty have concealed what hath passed him, but so lively doth the one resemble the other in all conditions as, setting aside their degree, there is small difference. In beastly drunkenness this monster exceeds the other, and in railing of all estates he overruns him, sparing no woman, be she never so virtuous, nor any man, be he never so honourable. And this beast, being never restrained from this liberty of railing, but rather challenging more than was given the other knave, hath now run into this madness, and dares, as it seems, to speak anything, and so I commit him to the keeper of his bottles, who is much to blame for my persecution.

Thirdly, I will prove him a buggerer of a boy that is his cook, as well by that I have been an eye-witness of, as also by his own confession too often to myself and others who will not lie. It is most true that I have seen this boy many a time in his chamber two hours close locked together with him, namely at Whitehall and at his house in Broad Street, and finding it so, I have gone to the back door to satisfy myself, at the which the boy hath come out all in a sweat, and I have gone in and found the beast in the same plight. But to make it more apparent, my Lord Harry saw more, and the boy confessed it unto Southwell, and himself confirmed it to Mr. William Cornwallis. Thus much for proof of his sodomy, who is a beast stained with all impudicity.

Fourthly will I truly hit him with his detestable practices of hired murders, of which some hath been attempted, one executed, and divers intended, and though it be long since, it may not be forgotten how Denny attempted the killing of Faunt, and shooting at him from a rest with his caliver, strake his hat from his head.

And I would be as loath to omit the killing of Sankey (being sometime a special favourite to this monster) by his servant Weekes, who at the gallows confessed to the minister that he was procured to this villainy by commandment of his monstrous master, who gave him a hundred pounds in gold after the murder committed to shift him away, and so much was found about when he was apprehended.

But leaving this, though it were not impertinent, I will go more near him in mine own knowledge for his intended murders against divers. At what time the quarrel fell out between this monstrous villain and Mr. Sidney, he employs Raleigh and myself with a message to this effect, that the question might be honourably ended. Mr. Sidney accepted gladly thereof, and desired much it might not be deferred, which when he heard, never meaning anything less, as after it appeared, told us plainly he was not to hazard himself, having received such an injury, and therefore he had another course, and that was to have him murdered in his lodging. The manner how he would have done it, and what words I gave him, and how I withstood it, let my Lord Harry, who doth very honourably, and Raleigh as honestly, report, with whom he dealt in as vile a practice against the Earl of Leicester, and that will Raleigh avow upon him, whose testimony will serve, and I want it, in other matters as foul as this.

Another murder he intended against Mr Cheke, and would have put it in execution if I had not told him I would bewray him, and so stayed him from this villainy, and the manner how it should have been done I have declared to Mr. Vice-chamberlain, and not long since (as my cousin Arthur Gorges well knows by the discovery of a gentleman that serves this monster, and would not consent to such a villainy), he had warning given him to look to himself, and how it was intended he should be murdered on Richmond Green, going home to his lodging at twelve o'clock at night, and another gentleman of his revealed it to me, with whom likewise he dealt in the matter, and this gentleman, refusing to be commanded by him to so foul a fact, was shaken off, and for no other cause.

Lastly, if himself lie not, he hath practiced with a man of his own that now serves in Ireland to kill Raleigh whenever he goes to any skirmish, and this he terms a brave vendetta, and of this intent of his I have advertised Raleigh.

Fifthly, to show that the world never brought forth such a villainous monster, and for a parting blow to give him his full payment, I will prove against him his most horrible and detestable blasphemy in denial of the divinity of Christ our Saviour, and terming the Trinity as a fable (this heard my Lord Windsor, my Lord Harry, Raleigh, Southwell and myself), and that Joseph was a wittol and the Blessed Virgin a whore. My Lord Harry, Raleigh and myself were present when he spake these words, and Mr. Harry Noel will say that Raleigh told it him.

To conclude, he is a beast in all respects, and in him no virtue to be found and no vice wanting, which things for a time have been dissembled, but long time may not be suffered.