

SUMMARY: The documents below are scribal copies in Sir Francis Walsingham's files of six undated letters written by Charles Arundel to unidentified correspondents. In the second, fifth and sixth letters Arundel refers to his correspondent as 'Sweet Lady', and in the first letter he refers to his correspondent as 'sweet friend'. The letters have been copied consecutively by the scribe on three sheets, ff. 112r, 112v and 111v, without any break to indicate where one letter begins and another ends

The first, third and fifth letters allude to Oxford's imprisonment in the Tower after the birth on 21 March 1581 of his illegitimate son by Anne Vavasour, and can likely be dated to shortly after that date. Arundel's comments in the fifth letter suggest that at this time he was still under house arrest in the custody of the Vice-chamberlain of the Household, Sir Christopher Hatton (c.1540-1591).

It would appear that before the birth of Oxford's illegitimate son and his attempted flight from England and imprisonment in the Tower, the Queen had intended to release Howard and Arundel from house arrest. In the third letter Arundel explains that their release had now been delayed through Leicester's intervention. Leicester had convinced Oxford that to have Howard and Arundel released on the heels of his own public disgrace would give them an enormous advantage over him. Leicester thus offered to present the Queen with a letter from Oxford requesting that the release of Howard and Arundel be delayed. Arundel writes:

First, the formal cause of my stay was a supplication presented to the Queen by Leicester from Oxford. Leicester, having understood of the Queen's intent overnight to deliver me and the rest, sent him counsel to make it ready the next day, promising to break the ice and to deliver it, assuring him further that if he did not now follow his counsel, his enemies, being discharged, would fill the Queen's ears with such hateful matter as, coming upon the ground of the late offence, would make him to forsake his country.

As Arundel explains, on Leicester's advice Oxford duly wrote to the Queen concerning the consequences to him of Howard and Arundel's release, and also making this telling point:

[A]nd in reason she was bound to do no less, considering that for her sake he [=Oxford] had gotten the name of a promoter [=informer].

In other words, Oxford reminded the Queen that he had become known as an informer because he had revealed Howard and Arundel's treason to her, and that the least she could do under the circumstances was to keep Howard and Arundel under arrest so as not to give them an advantage over him now that he himself was in disgrace as a result of the birth of his illegitimate son.

According to Arundel, Oxford also appeared before the Privy Council 'submissive and penitent, according to the directions of his godfather [=Leicester]'.

Leicester's motive for intervening on Oxford's behalf was not altruistic. There was long-seated animosity between Leicester and Lord Henry Howard because of the latter's conviction that Leicester had been behind the downfall and execution of his brother, Thomas Howard (1538-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk. Oxford accusations against Howard and Arundel had therefore given Leicester an advantage over two long-time enemies. However since Oxford was now in the Tower, it was in Leicester's interest to assist Oxford in keeping Howard and Arundel under house arrest so that the validity of Oxford's accusations against them would not be impeached by his own recent disgrace. As Arundel writes (referring to Leicester as 'the great devil'):

[A]nd then that his [=Oxford's] fault is qualified that it may not take away the validity of his accusations, as though in flying he could say more than at his abiding here, but this it must be because the great devil will have it so.

In the end, there was no public confrontation, although the Queen was still insisting that Oxford publicly accuse Howard and Arundel as late as 14 July 1581 (see TNA SP 12-149-69, ff. 160-1):

The only stay groweth through the importunate suit that is made for the delivery of the Lord Henry and Mr Charles Arundel, whom before their delivery her Majesty thinketh meet they should be confronted by the Earl, who hath made humble request to be set at liberty before he be brought to charge them, as he was at the time he gave first information against them.

The lady to whom Arundel wrote several of the letters below has not been identified. However it seems likely, in view of Arundel's reference to her 'banishment', that she was Anne (nee Dacre) Howard (1557–1630), Countess of Arundel, the wife of Norfolk's eldest son and heir, Philip Howard (1557-1595), 13th Earl of Arundel. From the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online:

The Countess of Arundel was a 'woman of strong character and religious disposition'. During the early 1580s, while living at Arundel Castle, she converted to Roman Catholicism. She openly professed her beliefs, and the queen committed her for a year to the care of Sir Thomas Shirley at Wiston, Sussex, during which time her first child, Elizabeth, was born in 1583.

It is not clear when the Countess or Arundel was sent by the Queen to the house of Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542–1612), but the close ties between Lord Henry Howard and the Countess' husband, Philip Howard, the tone used by Charles Arundel in addressing her in the letters below, together with his reference to her 'banishment', suggest that the Countess of Arundel was Charles Arundel's hitherto-unidentified correspondent.

[1]

Jhesus

[CROSSED OUT: (illegible) the (illegible) Earl(?) of Oxford's(?) fault] imported herewithal that (illegible) had excused it as done before repentance.

2. That his mind was now as zealous and as dutiful to her as any man's alive.
3. That his flight was not to exempt himself from her authority, but grounded on a judgment of his own nativity, and misgiving of his mind that he should be in durance.

Would you not marvel, said she, that this purgation should be used by some of your own place? I (illegible) long debated against this favour, as to seem alleging that a crime could not be satisfied with words, & our liberty suspended [INTERLINED: hereby may you see clear light of that I guessed at before] in hope of new matters to fall out upon (illegible), which no doubt hath sent [INTERLINED: him] instructions by Milles, and then that his fault is qualified that it may not take away the validity of his accusations, as though in flying he could say more than at his abiding here, but this it must be because the great devil will have it so.

Truly, I am now even at my wits' end, and know not what to say, nor which way to turn me, seeing a known and manifest enemy is able to impugn the resolution of a Council. All are in admiration, and no man knows which way to help. The meaning [] by [-by] detaining us, to win time, which giveth hope of working somewhat. Let me have both your consent and your counsel, for I protest before God my mind is so affrighted with this causeless change, and the light it showeth of the power our enemies retain to work their wills without any reason, that I have lost the pole, and know not in what climate I am shaken. This is a strange liberty, for one tyrant to usurp in a state of freedom, but thus hath he dealt ever, and this is his stinking and malicious nature.

I have no other news, and therefore, sweet friend, I recommend you to your own wish, and send us both as much ability to friend each other as there is goodwill and constancy.

[2]

So long as any man will move a doubt or put a scruple in the Queen's head, which can never want, considering our enemies, we are not like to be delivered that way. You see what credit the good old gentleman hath still to mischief us against the favour of the whole board. God reward you for your most affectionate and friendly lines. Imagine me to be the tother bucket that will sink to the bottom to bring you above water, and there an end. Forbear your suit. It will make them doubt wrong measure, and seek about in a rush, turning all our faith and constancy one to another in all these actions rather to the sleight of practice than to the force of truth. I will come to you, sweet Lady, through brazen walls, as to my only joy and chiefest comfort. But let us so contain our [] as, it being as it is, it may most turn to our own advantage. If you have any answer, send it. I

am daily plunged in more and more discomfort. Farewell, and remember him that forgets not you. Sweet Lady, the comfort of this fickle world is no better than a winter's summer, which fadeth ere it warm our earthly bodies.

[3]

I would not for anything but I had found opportunity this day once again to write unto you because, if you mark it well, it will give light to my present condition. First, the formal cause of my stay was a supplication presented to the Queen by Leicester from Oxford. Leicester, having understood of the Queen's intent overnight to deliver me and the rest, sent him counsel to make it ready the next day, promising to break the ice and to deliver it, assuring him further that if he did not now follow his counsel, his enemies, being discharged, would fill the Queen's ears with such hateful matter as, coming upon the ground of the late offence, would make him to forsake his country.

Hereupon he wrote the principal point that touched us was that, unless her Majesty would banish him out of her sight forever, she must now restrain his enemies of that exceeding triumph which they would make upon this disgrace, and in reason she was bound to do no less, considering that for her sake he had gotten the name of a promoter. This argument prevailed so much with a favourable judge that forthwith a countermand of liberty was directed to our keepers, all and several. In the end he promised to do her better service yet in the same kind if he were delivered. He may jest, as [] to the woman, that the spirit of ink was in her practice. Well, in conclusion, since

f. 112v

(illegible heading at top of page)

this supplication was presented, with a heap of other reasons for his furnishing the place against this gallant time, dancing with the Queen etc., as we have given over all bitter speeches, and we are so troubled between care to let him in again, and fear of shame and obloquy, considering the foulness of the fact, that we know not which way to turn us, only fear of smirch and respect of shame, considering the graveness(?) of the fault, hath kept him out; otherwise he had been ere this reconciled.

By my durance I hope I lose no grace. God provideth for the best. Imagine your friend is yourself, and not another self, caring more for you than for myself. For every friend before I have ten, and those that were arrested. Farewell, and God send you my wish, which is your own desire.

[4]

I have been inquisitor to understand the demeanour of the monster before the Lords at his first appearance, which I find to be so submissive and penitent, according to the directions of his godfather, as was wonderful, lamenting his ill destiny that led him to the displeasing of the most gracious Princess that ever was, and whose displeasure he would willingly welcome with the loss of life etc.

This moved such pity as my opinion is he shall not stay where he is, although another manner of charge were given to the Lieutenant for well looking to him than ever was given touching any of us. I hear he hath the lodging that the Lieutenant had of special favour appointed for my Lord Harry.

Well, the conclusion is, that for the countenance of his lechery(?) [] have I rest in bonds, and so there is no remedy but for the pleasing of ill humours our monster must endure a parcel of the punishment belonging to his villainy.

It exceeds how some have pleaded for this prince, and surely but for them he had never been committed. I could not choose but smile when it was told me that no man could allege either virtue, honour, oversight, etc. in his behalf; the best argument that any of his friends could use was the gallantness of his men's suits of apparel against this time of triumph, and the strange device of his men's new liveries. What would you more? The man is son of the white hen, and must be absolute, a pena et a culpa. I have reserved stones for him, and much worse than yet hath been heard of, if ever I be called forth to touch him. If justice may have her swinge, he shall be jerked in another manner, and truly it is a matter equal in weight with my mind that he hath done, and not different in impiety of execution.

Some of mine own friends are not the most kind, but I rather sigh with inward grief than complain of my []. God reward your kind and constant friendship toward me. And so with more good wishes than this leaf hath letters, I and my Lord Harry and myself [sic?] have been infinitely bound today, and so [] dealt for one of us dealt for the other. It is our fortune to march arm in arm in every friendly register. Farewell in haste.

[5]

Sweet Lady, your last hath delivered me from almost as great an agony as yourself endured, for as it is not incident to many lynx-like(?) minds to see the least(?), so still I gathered by your silence that something was amiss which my prentice durst not tell me. Now thanks be given to God for the change, and found no better remedy than cinnamon-water, which I pray you want not.

Milles hath reported that there is a great person who, not seeming to have any conference with the villain, his master, since his flight, taketh a certain message from his mouth, pretended to be sent him from the villain at his going out, to this intent, that her Majesty should not so far [] show herself with choler for this fact, that she let go those against

whom he would prove worse matter that should gall us all [+to] the quick, etc., and therefore both the

f. 111v

villain and his great solicitor craved of the Queen that we might be still forthcoming to answer to such articles as both he could and would object against us when the former(?) were so pacified as that he might be called forth to answer, wherewith most certainly accordeth that Mr. Vice-chamberlain told me, that not long before his grass widow fell in labour, he was most earnest both with the Queen and himself for trial. And thus I must tarry all men's turns, and so(?) shall have leisure to build scaffolds for our heads when others build for a May-game.

The villain's friends begin to faint because they find that neither they can see and suffer this infamous monster without punishment, except they would profane and soil the court, making it no better than a stew in common speech of Christendom, and beside, for that they find their leaking vessel cannot carry water.

Mr. Vice-chamberlain is a man of very good conscience and my honourable friend, and in my conscience, though he say little to me, I find by others he much lamenteth that men should so much forget themselves as to friend or further him.

A great councillor told a friend of mine that all the matter is but a trifle, and had full proof in nothing. Judge you what my enemies will let pass when they bite at such bubbles. But God is strong, and though the monster had rather die than see me delivered, yet in despite of him I must have liberty. Your great friend and [] will needs have it that our friends' importunacy hath been a cause of the long restraint. It maketh neither here nor there. It is but his excuse of smoke because he will come unto the washing-house. He can very properly imagine causes, but he giveth other poor men leave either to bear or to receive them. Farewell, sweet Lady, and God send you my wish, that is your own will.

[6]

If I could write you anything worth your knowledge, my disposition were to content you at this hour, to play the philosopher to persuade you think restraint liberty, and limits of walls and doors a walk for a king. That were lost upon you, that have lived so long in contemplation that you are rather to teach me how to contempt the world than I to counsel you.

Sweet lady, albeit my advertisements can yield you little taste of the proceedings of the time, being affairs of too great depth for me to sound, & of such moment as surmounteth far the reach of my capacity, yet can I not restrain my pen to such a kind of silence as may forbear to show my vowed affection, or leave your manifold courtesies

unremembered, which I determine still to reveal(?) and manifest, though to satisfy I am deemed the [sic?] mean.

I understand by common report of your disgrace and banishment, two things I know very ill agreeing with your disposition; howbeit in cases of necessity, patience is to be preferred where the will is abridged, and though it seem unto you a cause of some perplexity to have your desires limited in some respects, yet if you arm your mind with a resolute patience such as is requisite to a person perplexed, it is neither restraint, rigour or any adverse chance of fortune that can pierce you, for the calamities of our wretched life do seem more grievous unto us by the conceit of our own minds than they are indeed in their proper nature, never so much afflicting us as when we suffer them to invade by committing ourselves to melancholy passions and pensiveness of heart.

Wherefore, sweet Lady, I desire you, even with the sprite of a faithful poor friend, that you give not spurs to the humour that may spoil you, nor leave the pleasures you may more enjoy to recount the troubles you have happily passed, but rather pluck up your courage, and follow the example of some of your friends in cases of like misadventure, and expect some present succour, and think that God hath not forgotten you, who, according to his divine justice, hath laid his hand on the wicked accuser, which may qualify in part the chastisement you endure.