

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 6 November 1590 written from Edinburgh by Henry Lok to Lord Burghley. The letter reveals that Lok had been Oxford's servant for almost 20 years. By his own account Lok had been among the few who had served Oxford honestly, and at times had even disbursed money of his own on Oxford's behalf. It thus seems strange that Oxford, according to Lok's account, not only had never rewarded Lok as he had bountifully rewarded others, but that Oxford had, in the end, refused to recommend Lok to another position. Lok himself seems to suspect that the underlying reason was that Oxford had lost £2000 through purchase of a half share in Michael Lok's investment in the Frobisher voyages to the Canadian Arctic in 1576-8. However, as Henry Lok points out, he had had no personal involvement in Oxford's financially disastrous investment with his uncle, Michael Lok, having been absent in Lincolnshire at the time Michael Frobisher had persuaded Oxford to invest. Given Lok's allegations against Oxford's servants, particularly Israel Amyce, it seems likely that a further reason for Oxford's apparent mistrust of Lok was that Oxford's other servants had influenced Oxford against Lok.

From the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online:

Lok, Henry (d. in or after 1608), poet, was the third son of Henry Lok (d. 1571), a London mercer, and his wife, Anne Locke, née Vaughan (c.1530–1590x1607). Sir William Lok was his grandfather, the traveller Michael Lok his uncle, and the versifier of the psalms Michael Cosworth his cousin.

*Lok married Ann Moyle of Cornwall, with whom he had two sons, Henry (b. 1592) and Charles. Perhaps motivated by these family responsibilities, Lok became one of the most productive writers of devotional poetry of the 1590s: his *Sundry Christian Passions* was published in 1593 and then reprinted in his volume entitled *Ecclesiastes* in 1597. The latter contained an unparalleled sequence of sixty dedicatory sonnets addressed to a veritable who's who of late-Elizabethan literary patrons.*

Eventually Cecil found some use for Lok in France and even acknowledged his service with the gift of a gelding. In 1599 Lok (who was skilled in cipher) was in Bayonne, assiduously collecting political information for Cecil. Unfortunately he also began to arouse the suspicions of the locals, who clearly did not believe his claim that he was merely an English traveller en route for Spain with the entourage of the French ambassador. Back home in England by April 1600 and living in the Strand, his services seem to have been dispensed with by Cecil. Despite his previous poetic commendation of King James's poetry, Lok fared no better during the new reign. By March 1606 he was imprisoned as an insolvent debtor in the Westminster gatehouse. In May 1608 he was again incarcerated for debt and pleaded with Cecil to be transferred to the Clink at Southwark. Desperate appeals in October 1608 to Cecil appear to have gone unanswered, after which time nothing else is known about Lok's fate.

For mention of Henry Lok in Charles Arundel's allegations against Oxford in early 1581, see TNA SP/151/46, ff. 103-4.

4 Orazio, that came with him out of Italy, made it the quarrel of his departure, as Henry Lok can testify.

For Henry Lok's sonnet to Oxford in *Ecclesiastes*, see STC 16696.

For Oxford's mention of Henry Lok in a letter to Sir Robert Cecil written circa May 1601, see CP 181/80:

My very good brother, I have received by Henry Lok your most kind message

The letter suggests that Henry Lok was then still in Sir Robert Cecil's service.

Oxford invested £2520 with Henry Lok's uncle, Michael Lok (c.1532–1620x22), in the Frobisher voyages, losing his entire investment when the 'gold' ore brought back from Baffin Island proved to be worthless. For additional documents concerning Oxford's investment in the Frobisher voyages, see TNA SP 12/149/42, ff. 98-108 and TNA E 164/36, pp. 317-23.

For the Frobisher voyages generally, see:

Inuit and Englishmen; The Nunavut Voyages of Martin Frobisher, at http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/Search.do?ex=on&R=VE_403&lang=en.

See also McDermott, James, ed., *The Third Voyage of Martin Frobisher to Baffin Island 1578* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2001).

Right Honourable, although the course of my life have not been so happy as to make me known to your Lordship in that measure of desert which the duty I have carried to your person and the reverence I owe to your virtues would gladly have afforded, yet the manifold experience I have of your Honour's benign ear lent to the petitions of many of mean worth maketh me bold by these my letters to prevent the report of the cause of this my abode in Scotland (which coming by others might hap sound the less favourable) by delivering to your Lordship a truth particularly of my intent herein, the rather for that it is not unknown to your Honour how from my first entrance into the world (now almost twenty years since) I have bent myself wholly to follow the service of the honourable Earl of Oxford, whose favour shone sometimes so graciously upon me that my young years were easily drawn thereby to account it as impossible that the beauty thereof should be eclipsed or bounty fruitless, whereof yet to make doubtful the first I had the true precedent of many fallen before therefrom, but of the other am myself become the only example, as one who may justify by oath to your Honour (before whose gracious presence a falsehood were very unfitly uttered) that of all that ever followed him I alone never tasted of his liberality by gift or procurement of land, lease, or permanent gift of his own [PAGE TORN] [CROSSED OUT: by his procurement], nor in clothes, money, or

any way to the [PAGE TORN] of one hundred marks (for touching the loss of his Lordship's £2000 [PAGE TORN] with Michael Lok (which I have heard my credit interested in), [PAGE TORN] as I repute the man [=Michael Lok] far from purpose to deceive, so to acquit myself from any intelligence with the practice used therein, save in being a conductor of the money at time of payment, I must be ready by oath and otherwise to prove what I affirm and his Honour knoweth for true, that Sir Martin Frobisher persuaded it, Edward Fenton writ letters, and William Walters carried them between my Lord and my uncle till all was concluded during my absence in Lincolnshire with my Lord Willoughby.

Having therefore reaped so little benefit by his service, wherein through my own indiscretion I have vainly spent & brought to nothing above one hundred pounds a year which I had to live on, and consumed all my youth unprofitably, neglecting such better courses as my best friends thought me more fit for, I of late (indeed too late) resolved to stop the opinion of many which thought me among the number of the over-many greedy horse-leeches which had sucked too ravenously on his sweet liberality (as indeed his favour and my access had given me also sufficient means to imitate their example in, had I held it honest or had it been agreeable to my nature & purpose in serving him), and therefore I craved of his Honour this favour, to be commanded by his Lordship to some place of service or preferred otherwise to some course of life by travail in which I might supply the necessities of my life, or else that it would please his Lordship to enfranchise me of my former profession, and with my discharge to examine my actions past and such accounts as I had been interested in, as well to discover the truth of things concerning my own dealings as to prevent any falsehood which during my absence might be by others used in their accounts, and withal I made likewise known a debt of above fourscore pounds which is yet unpaid unto me (through the indirect dealing of Amyce) since his Lordship's and his Lady's of good memory's first being at Oldford and Hedingham Park which I was forced for household provision to disburse, for in all the time from my first coming to wait at your Honour's house in Strand till my withdrawing myself from daily attendance, which was at Amyce's, I never received above £360 or near thereabouts from any his Lordship's officers, but was continually forced either to borrow money for his occasions, or by suits (which your Honour favoured him in), or by selling of chains & jewels of my own sometimes to furnish him, & I dare affirm to your Honour that in all that time I never suffered one penny of debt to grow for anything spent about him or his, but kept, I hope, his proportion of expense (considering the honourable course he then took) within more reasonable bounds than any my predecessor or successor. And for the money I borrowed I never entangled his lands or sureties any way, which considerations made me the more boldly to crave the restitution of this small sum of money due to me, which was the only remainder of all his debts grown in my time and the best part of the stock of my decayed estate, which when I could not procure, neither yet (as a requital of my service, which I would have reputed it) I could have my accounts examined for which I had by letters to his Honour and by suit to Amyce, Lyly, Milles, and all of credit with him often been a suitor, I at length, being destitute of means for longer attendance on the suit, and seeing that there was no difference made from those which had most spoiled him & them who with silence had (as the proverb saith) faithfully served, and considering how unlikely it was for me in court or country to be preferred, being by him

discountenanced, but that I [PAGE TORN] to have all the world behold daily the loss of my former [PAGE TORN], I chose therefore (as the less evil) to withdraw myself for a space till that it should please God through the revolution of times to minister means and to touch the heart of some honourable person with will to procure my good, which would to God might grow by the service of my country in any honest calling for which I were accounted fit, even as I would with all faith & diligence endeavor with any hazard or travail to deserve the same, the rather to redeem the loss of my former time.

This, right Honourable, is the truth of my estate & purpose, wherein if your Lordship's gracious respect to a poor convertite may induce you to try the sincerity of my purpose, I hope your Lordship shall not repent your favour altogether evil placed on me, who would continually (in supply of my defective desert) crave of God, for your Lordship's requital, the daily increase of honour & perpetuity of all happiness. From Edinburgh the 6 November.

Your Honour's in all duty,

Henry Lok

Addressed: To the right honourable his very good Lord, the Lord Burghley, Lord High Treasurer of England.

Endorsed: 6 Nov. 1590, Henry Lok to my Lord from Edinburgh.