

SUMMARY: In this letter written from London to Dudley Carleton on 23 August 1599, John Chamberlain, amid other news, mentions that Oxford's wife, Elizabeth Trentham, Countess of Oxford, stood godmother, as the Queen's deputy, to Elizabeth Coke, daughter of Sir Edward Coke and his wife Elizabeth, widow of Sir William Hatton. Alice Spenser, Dowager Countess of Derby, and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, were also godparents. The transcript below is taken from McClure, Norman Egbert, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vol. I, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939) pp.82-5.

Good Master Carleton,

Having written twice since the beginning of this month, and hearing nothing from you, it makes us think that either you are hard set a-work, or else that you are so blocked up that letters can find no passage.

The world is well amended here since I wrote last, and the storm that seemed to look so black almost quite blown over. Yet our navy is gone to sea prettily strong and in good plight for so short warning, containing 23 ships and pinnaces of the Queen's, 12 good merchant ships provided by the City and six more hired by her Majesty, with 14 hoys well furnished with ordinance and made for fight. Our land forces are daily discharged little and little, and this day I think will be quite dissolved. The Hertfordshire men were sent home first, and so by degrees one after another, yet they all received pay more or less, some for four, some five days, and some for a whole week. On Friday there mustered 1600 horse by St. James, and the next day 400 for the clergy in St. George's field. Yet none of the noblemen have showed their troops, which together with other voluntaries are thought would double that number. If occasion had been to draw forces to a head or into camp, it is thought the first proportion would have risen to 27,000 foot and 3,000 horse. I assure you they were very well provided for the most part of horse, armour and apparel, and wanted not their setting forth with feathers, scarves, and such other light ware. The Lord General with all the great officers of the field came in great bravery to Paul's Cross on Sunday was sevensnight and dined with the Lord Mayor, and then was the alarm at hottest that the Spaniards were at Brest, which was as likely and fell out as true as all the rest. The vulgar sort cannot be persuaded but that there was some great mystery in the assembling of these forces, and because they cannot find the reason of it, make many wild conjectures and cast beyond the moon, as sometimes that the Queen was dangerously sick, otherwhile that it was to show to some that are absent that others can be followed as well as they, and that if occasion be, military services can be as well and readily ordered and directed as if they were present, with many other as vain and frivolous imaginations as these. The forces in the west country are not yet dismissed, for there if anywhere may be some doubt of danger. Sir William Russell was sent thither to be general and to take order for all things as he thought best. And now in the midst of all this hurly-burly is a sudden sound of peace, and that certain fellows are come from Brussels with commission from Spain.

The Lord Cromwell and Sir John Davies are newly come out of Ireland. The one's errand is thought to be about Sir Conyers Clifford's government, and so to return. The other, some say, hath that he went for. Sir Conyers Clifford's defeat was very foul at a place called the Curlews in O'Donnell's country, for besides himself and Sir Alexander Ratcliffe there were eight or nine commanders lost and above 240 men. There is great fault laid in one Captain Cosby, that wheeled about and caused the first disorder, but some say Sir Conyers himself went not soldierlike to work, and when he saw his error, though he might have escaped, would not outlive such a loss. Here was news awhile that Sir Thomas Norris and Sir Harry should be both dead of their hurts, but I saw a letter of the 14 of this present that only makes mention of Sir Thomas's weakness, without any show of extremity, and for Sir Harry, it is said he will be here shortly.

The Earl of Essex hath made many new knights, but I cannot yet come by the bead-roll. Marry, for a taste you shall have as many as I well remember, as first Sir Henry Lindley, Sir Harry Carey (that was Sir Francis Vere's lieutenant), two Lovelaces, Sir Ajax Harington, Sir Jack Heydon, Sir Dick Morrison, *cum multis aliis* English and Irish to the number of 59 in the whole since his first arrival. It is much marvelled that this humour should so possess him that, not content with his first dozens and scores, he should thus fall to huddle them up by half hundreds, and it is noted as a strange thing that a subject in the space of seven or eight years (not having been six months together in any one action) should upon so little service and small desert make more knights than are in all the realm besides, and it is doubted that if he continue this course he will shortly bring in tag and rag, cut and long-tail, and so draw the order into contempt.

The Lord Burghley hath his patent, and is by this time halfway at York. The Lady Hatton is brought abed of a daughter, which stops the mouth of the old slander, and about ten days since it was christened with great solemnity, the Queen (by her deputy, the Lady of Oxford) and the Countess Dowager of Derby being godmothers, and the Lord Treasurer godfather. I had almost forgot the greatest news of all, that Dick Fowler was committed to the Tower the last week for no less matter than suspicion of practice against her Majesty's person, but I hope it will fall out better with him upon examination, for though I always thought him foolish enough, yet I did not look he should prove devilish. Captain Chute (that should or would have been knight in France) is in likewise about some such matter. And Alabaster, that escaped out of the Clink, is brought in *coram* again, being sent from Rochelle. Your brother Carleton hath been almost this sevensnight in town to offer his service with two horses to Master Secretary, but yet could never find him at leisure, so that I doubt he will come too late when the play is done.

This is all we have, unless I should tell you that last week at a puppet-play in St. John's Street the house fell, and hurt between thirty and forty persons, and slew five outright, whereof two (they say) were good handsome whores. Master Dormer was in town yesterday, and came to accompany Sir Harry Lee to the court. Sir Anthony Mildmay is come to town with a cornet of his own of 60 horse. I think to go into Oxfordshire very

shortly, and God knows how long I shall tarry there, but I imagine there and at Knebworth till toward Michaelmas.

In the meantime, with my best wishes, I betake you to God. From London this 23rd of August, 1599.

Yours most assuredly,

John Chamberlain

To my very good friend Master Dudley Carleton, attending on the Lord Governor of Ostend, give these.