

SUMMARY: In this letter written from London to Sir Dudley Carleton on 16 February 1621 [=1622], John Chamberlain mentions the suicide of Oxford's son-in-law, Francis Norris (1579-1622), 1st Earl of Berkshire; the prospective marriage of his daughter Elizabeth Norris to Christopher Villiers, the brother of King James' favourite George Villiers, Marquis of Buckingham; and the return from sea *re infecta* ('the business being unfinished') of Oxford's son and heir, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford. According to *The Complete Peerage*, from December 1621 to March 1622 Henry de Vere was vice-admiral of a fleet to patrol the Channel at a salary of £3 a day. The 'unfinished business' appears to have involved the interception of certain ships from the East Indies. The transcript below is taken from McClure, Norman Egbert, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vol. II, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939) pp. 422-5.

My very good Lord, your nephew came to you so well stored that I doubt not but he hath made a full relation, and furnished you with whatever is here stirring. Whiles he was here I was the less diligent, and shall not be very forward hereafter, as being discouraged divers ways, for the times are dangerous and the world grows tender and jealous of free speech. The uncertainty likewise, and variety of reports, is such that we know not what to believe of that is done here under our nose, and what is given out today for certain is tomorrow contradicted, for since two years that the forge or mint was set up at Amsterdam we have never left off coining, so apish are we in imitation of what is worst. Another reason: I shall not dissemble that I wax idle, and unwilling to take any pains more than needs.

The Lords are almost tired with urging and drawing on the benevolence from particular persons, and therefore having taken the cream of all hereabout and sent for all the prime gentlemen of the bordering shires to take the like course in the country, they have commended this town to the Lord Mayor's care, who exacts what he can get above (but not under) the whole sum that men are set in the subsidy, as forty or fifty pound of them that are so in the book, which riseth to the rate of seven subsidies and a half at least. Your brother Carleton is so terrified with the very rumour that he writes me how unwelcome it will be in those parts for divers considerations he sets down, and that it will be drawn from them with malevolence.

He writes further that letters are come down to the coroner that the evidence touching the Earl of Berkshire's manner of death must not be urged, but the matter made as fair as may be. It is generally thought that Kit Villiers shall carry away his daughter. For all I have heard or can learn I see no cause of so desperate a resolution but that he had *laesum principium*, and the want of God's grace.

Your great Bishop of Spalato is undertaking such another adventure, having required and obtained leave to go for Rome. He tarries yet for his safe-conduct, and, as he says, to clear the opinion might be conceived that he is employed from hence. He pretends

ancient acquaintance and familiarity with this Pope. and that the Kings of Spain and France have undertaken for his security, beside hope of great preferments. The Spanish ambassador is said to be the chief architect in this business, and that he hath enchanted him into this fool's paradise.

Touching your States, here no doubt you know more than I can write. Sure either they be in the wrong or we do them great wrong, for the world here is generally distasted with their proceeding, and their best friends are fallen from them, seeing their perverse, wilful and insensate dealing, as if God had infatuated and blinded their understanding not to see that they do the Spaniards' business, and that all the world works to their ends more than they could expect or almost wish, but if it be *in fatis* that we should sink together, who can withstand it?

The Lord Digby's journey into Spain is deferred, but how or for how long I hear not. Some speak of an ambassador coming from the Emperor that must be heard before he go. Sir Robert Carey is made Baron of Leppington in Yorkshire, and is to leave his place about the Prince to Sir Thomas Savage. Judge Chamberlain of the King's Bench was married on Thursday to the Lady Berkeley, sole daughter to the last Lord Chamberlain Hunsdon. He makes her jointure of a thousand pound a year, and is to leave her ten thousand pound in money. Sir John Hobart is shortly to marry the eldest daughter of the Earl of Bridegewater. Sir Henry Savile went to Eton on Wednesday in weak case but well resolved in mind, and willing to depart when it shall please God to call, the rather he says for that having lived in good times, he doth fear or foresee worse. The King is still at Newmarket, but expected here within ten or twelve days. He is to go the next week a-shroving to Sir John Croft's. That Lady and her daughter Cecily have been much at Newmarket of late.

The Earl of Oxford came hither yesterday from sea *re infecta*, for while he was providing somewhat he wanted at Portsmouth, the East Indian ships are said to have passed along by the coast of France into Holland.

The Lord of Doncaster is arrived this day. His lady with physic hath brought herself into a poor plight, and so overthrown and weakened her body that it is doubted she will hardly hold out.

Here be certain verses made of Dr. Corbet, Dean of Christ Church, who preaching before the King at Woodstock last summer was so gravelled that he was fain to give over, neither had he better luck in his play than in his preaching, for thinking to mend the matter with a comedy of the marriage of the arts, it proved so tedious, as well for the matter as the action, that the King endured it with great impatience, whereupon the very boys and children flouted it with a rime:

*A marriage we had, but offering there was none,
Save that the King offered twice or thrice to be gone.*

So with the remembrance of my best service to my good lady, I commend you to the protection of the Almighty. From London this 16th of February, 1621 [=1622].

Your Lordship's most assuredly at command,

John Chamberlain

To the right honourable Sir Dudley Carleton, knight, Lord Ambassador for his Majesty with the States of the United Provinces at the Hague.