

SUMMARY: In this letter written from London to Sir Dudley Carleton on 30 March 1622, John Chamberlain mentions that Oxford's son and heir, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, has been barred from court for his involvement in the clandestine marriage on 27 March 1622 of Oxford's granddaughter, Elizabeth Norris (d.1645), to Edward Wray (d.1658), the son of Sir William Wray of Glentworth, Lincolnshire. According to Chamberlain, Elizabeth Norris married Edward Wray to avoid having to marry Christopher Villiers, the brother of King James' favourite, George Villiers, Marquis of Buckingham. This affront offended both the King and Buckingham, and Henry de Vere not only felt the force of King James' royal displeasure, but also made a powerful enemy in Buckingham. It thus seems not unlikely that there is a direct connection between Henry de Vere's role in forestalling the marriage of Christopher Villiers to Elizabeth Norris and the allegations which in less than a month resulted in Henry de Vere's imprisonment in the Tower (see TNA SP 14/129/62). At the time of the marriage, Elizabeth Norris was living with Oxford's daughter Susan, and her husband, Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, her father Francis Norris (1579-1622), 1st Earl of Berkshire, having committed suicide by shooting himself with a crossbow a few months earlier. The transcript below is taken from McClure, Norman Egbert, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vol. II, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939) pp. 427-30.

My very good Lord, I have not heard of your man Hudson since he left here your letter of the 9th of this present with the *Cancellaria Hispanica*, which laying by me for a day or two because I had borrowed for a set time Barclay's *Argenis* (a book somewhat rare yet, and hard to come by), I was so taken and carried away with it that I could not give over (as indeed it is the most delightful fable that ever I met with). In the meantime, the Bishop of Winchester sent to me to inquire if I could help him to such a book, which I willingly did, though I had read never a word of it more than the title, and so sent him word, but he hath not yet restored it, which if he do not the sooner, I will make bold to put him in mind of it, though I have not seen him this half year. The book is much sought and inquired after, and I hear the King is not fully satisfied but that much of it is counterfeit and supposed.

He hath been here and at Hampton Court now this fortnight, but comes not to the sermons in the chapel this Lent. The tilting for the coronation should have held on Monday, but the weather proving foul, it was deferred till this day. Your States have been with him twice or thrice, and with the council oftener. We hear the East Indian ship that was stayed is restored, and he blamed that took her, and his commission taken from him.

Within these few days we have had divers alarms of a great Spanish Armada preparing directly for England, which though it be not very probable, yet coming so many several ways, as from Venice, Rome, Spain and other places, the council begin to apprehend it, and to make provision accordingly, as well by musters as otherwise. I should rather fear

Ireland, where the red-shanks belonging to the Earl of Argyle are already entered in great numbers, and the country being already so ill affected, if any foreign force should accrue, it might put us to great trouble. Sir Dudley Digges and his fellow-commissioners went hence on Thursday. God send them to amend what is amiss there, else a scourge is to be feared from thence, for the little care we have had in so long time to bring them to civility and religion. There was leave said to be given to the Earl of Argyle to levy a regiment of 4000 English and Scots to serve the Spaniard, but as far as I hear with no great success, for the Spanish ambassador says he can have a whole regiment of captains, but few or no soldiers. He supped with the King on Wednesday night, and gives out he will be gone shortly. Sir Richard Weston, Chancellor of the Exchequer, accompanied with Master Dickinson, was to go ambassador on Monday next to the Archdukes, but the coming of the Emperor's ambassador (who is said to be at Calais) hath stayed his journey, as perhaps likewise the Lord Chichester's or Belfast's into Germany, who was to be attended by Sir Peter Hayman and some others that had showed themselves resty and backward in the benevolence. The Lord of Doncaster is to return this next week into France, and the Lord Digby with his lady and a train of 15 or 16 women is on his way, or already at Plymouth.

About a fortnight since, on the papists' Good Friday, there were great doings at the Spanish ambassador's, and many ladies and others invited to see the ceremony or tragedy of their whipping, among whom an English baron or viscount was said to be of the number.

On Tuesday night or Wednesday morning the Lady Marquess was brought abed of a daughter, and on Thursday the King kept her company all the afternoon at cards. The last week the Lady Bludder lay in at Denmark House where the Lord Treasurer, Lord Marquis, and Countess of Buckingham were gossips. On Wednesday Master Wray married the Lady Norris, daughter to the late Earl of Berkshire, who was designed to Kit Villiers. How the matter was carried were too long and too uncertain to relate, but it is so ill taken that he is put out of the bedchamber and commanded not to come at court nor within ten miles' compass. I hear likewise the Lord of Oxford is forbidden the court about this business. The gentlewoman carried herself very cunningly and resolutely, not so much (as is thought) for the love of the one as to be rid of the other.

On Sunday was sevenight the King caused the Prince to be sworn or admitted of the Privy Council, commending him to them with many good words and praise of his dutiful carriage and filial demeanour. Sir John Suckling is in speech to be shortly sworn Secretary, and Sir Arthur Ingram and Sir John Hippisley to be made barons.

Sir Dudley Digges left this enclosed for you. It seems he grows bare, what with building and other devices, so that he was fain now before his going to procure the King's letter to the East Indian Company that he might take out all his capital or stock, but it took no effect nor could be granted. Here is a little pamphlet goes under his name (though he will not be named), which doth him no great credit neither, saving that hereupon some flouting wits call him Sir Dido Digges. The late Lord Chancellor hath set out the life or reign of Henry the Seventh. It is pity he should have any other employment. I have not read

much of it, but if the rest of our history were answerable to it, I think we should not need to envy any other nation in that kind. Master Brent is quietly possessed of Merton College, and carried it away clear from all the competitors, among whom was George Garrard. As I was now writing, my Lord of Winchester hath sent home my book, for the which I give you many thanks. So with the remembrance of my best service to my good lady, I commend you to the protection of the Almighty. From London this 30th of March, 1622.

Your Lordship's most assuredly at command,

John Chamberlain

This day proving foul, the running is again put off till Easter Tuesday, which being St. George's day, the ceremonies of that feast are prorogued till the 16th of May. The Lord Marquis' daughter, being but a weak child, was christened this morning by the King, the Duchess, and the Countess of Buckingham, and named Jacobina. The poor Lady Marquess is overtaken with the smallpox in her childbed. Sir John Suckling was sworn this day of the council, but yet not Secretary, as far as I hear. Yesterday was a foul falling out twixt the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord Treasurer about money to be delivered to Sir Louis Lewknor for the fetching of the Emperor's ambassador from Dover, who is to lodge at Denmark House, and Sir Thomas Edmondes, the treasurer and captain of the guard appointed to see him and his well treated. The Lord Chamberlain showed himself more sensible than he uses to be, and complained to the King in loud terms. Poor Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels, is in his old age fallen stark mad, and his place executed by Sir John Ashley, that had the reversion. Your cousin Windham or Bess Lytton is brought abed of a son. Spalato is this afternoon convented at Lambeth before the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Keeper, and divers other bishops, besides the Lord President, and Secretary Calvert, so that we shall shortly see what becomes of him. I think his livings be disposed of already. The voice goes that the Spanish ambassador, when he had brought him to his bent, told him that now he was unmasked and showed himself what he was, he might take his choice whether to starve here or go over and be burnt, for he would have no more to do with him.

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