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SUMMARY: In this letter written from London to Sir Dudley Carleton on 17 May 1623, John Chamberlain mentions a bill in the Star Chamber against Oxford's son and heir, Henry de Vere, 18<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. The transcript below is taken from McClure, Norman Egbert, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vol. II, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939) pp. 496-8.

My very good Lord, my writing is to little purpose now that you have such and so many agents here that will let nothing escape, yet Sir Robert Ayton's verses may be worth your reading wherein he woos the King for Eton, as likewise Thomas Murray's epitaph and the complaint of his own fortune, wherein he aims at the great stir and pursuit after certain bad fellows that all the last year made an occupation of stealing the King's deer out of Theobalds Park, though it be walled, which hath much incensed the King and moved great indignation, so that here have been divers privy searches and other diligence used to discover the principals, divers of the meaner sort being already in hold.

The last week Sir Henry Fiennes (half brother to the late Lord Norris or Berkshire) was fined in the Star Chamber at £2000, imprisonment, and other censures for contracting a marriage *de futuro* after his wife's decease with a young proper gentlewoman, one Mistress Somerfield, and in the meantime abusing her body, and goods to the value of £1600 he had gotten into his hands with intent to cozen her. Many things worth the noting passed in the pleading, too long to recite, especially one, that he used to hang a lock upon her flesh, as the words went in reading some of the examinations.

There is a bill newly put into the Star Chamber against the Earl of Oxford for certain scandalous speeches against the King and his government, whereof notice was sent him two days since. Whether it be only *ad correctionem*, or to satisfy the world that he hath not been detained so long upon a light displeasure, or to make the grace show the greater if, by the Lord of Buckingham's mediation, or in contemplation of his mistress the Lady Diana's suit, this fault may be forgiven him, time will show.

Last week here was a great marriage in town twixt the Lord St. John's eldest son to the Earl of Bridgewater's second daughter.

On Sunday was sevenight, Captain Borough, coming home from Gravesend, landed at Greenwich before he came to this town. Secretary Conway carried him presently to the King, who used him very graciously and made him knight, as likewise much about that time he gave the same honour to the young Viscount Doncaster whose father arrived here on Thursday night out of Spain, and as it seems, was welcome and well seen, for the next morning he had a warrant to the Lord Treasurer for a good round sum, but what it was I do not hear. It was bruited before his coming that he had given small content, and carried himself more stiffly in some points than some there thought fit, whereupon as well he as the Earl of Bristol were made strangers to the business, and reports went that the Prince's servants were kept from him, and that all things were managed by himself and the Lord of

Buckingham, as likewise that the King keeps all to himself *in scrinio pectoris*, and acquaints nobody with anything comes thence, but burns the letters as fast as he reads them. For my part, I presume these are but discourses of idle brains who had rather make news than want matter to talk. Indeed, posts go very fast to and fro, for since this day fortnight that Gresley arrived, here have been two more, whereof one that belongs to Sir John Hippisley came in less than seven days from Madrid, a thing not heard of.

We say here that Sir William Croft is sent from the Prince upon some message to the Queen of Bohemia. Here is great haste to set the fleet forward, and Sir Francis Steward is gone already with the patent whereby the Lord Marquis is created Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Coventry. He was willed to make all possible speed that it might be there before the marriage for the more grace to his Grace, yet all these plain demonstrations cannot beat it into the heads of the vulgar but that there be many rubs yet to be removed before the match be concluded, for they talk of many uncouth and unlikely conditions propounded, as well touching religion as matter of state, specially the committing of Plymouth and some other western haven into the Spaniard's hand till the jointure be assured and other promises performed, but this is so improbable and almost impossible that it cannot but proceed from a vain fear in the people, who the less they know the more they suspect. The Duke of Lennox is likewise made Duke of Richmond and Earl of Newcastle, and hath precedence by the Lord of Buckingham's own consent, that wrote he would not take place of his father, as he calls him, though he must as Lord Admiral during his time, but not his posterity, to whom this dignity doth not descend in neither of them both, but to their heirs males of their own body. It was expected the Earl of Arundel should have been raised to the same rank, but they say he stands upon restitution rather than creation. The Duke and Duchess of Richmond have gotten the grant of Ely House, in lieu whereof the bishop is to have that which was the Earl of Hertford's house in Cannon Row. The Spanish ambassador is to remove shortly to Exeter House, and the Duchess lays in hard to have all the furniture of Ely House, which is said to be very rich and to a great value. The world says she and her lord have laid about them and done their affairs well during this absence and interim.

Your cousin Will Lytton hath had a good windfall of late by the death of the Lady Weld, his wife's aunt, who made him executor, whereby it is thought he will get four or five thousand pounds at least besides two hundred pound land and great store of good stuff. I should congratulate his good fortune if he were more kind to his sisters. So with my best wishes I commend you to the protection of the Almighty. From London this 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1623.

Your Lordship's most assuredly at command,

John Chamberlain