

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 16 May 1575 from Thomas Butler (1531-1614), 10th Earl of Ormond, to Lord Burghley. Oxford had left England on 7 February 1575, and had learned, while in Paris, of his wife Anne Cecil's pregnancy. Ormond commends Oxford for having recently sent Anne 'tokens and letters', a fact which had apparently been reported to him by Lord Burghley. For Oxford's licence to travel, see TNA E 157/1, f. 1. For a letter from Dr. Richard Masters to Lord Burghley dated 7 March 1575 concerning Anne Cecil's pregnancy, see BL MS Lansdowne 19/83, ff. 181-2.

Oxford and Ormond had a number of things in common. Both received 'the finest of humanist educations', both proceeded MA at Oxford in 1566, both were admitted to Gray's Inn (Oxford in 1566, Ormond in 1567), both separated from their first wives, and both received dedicatory sonnets from Spenser in *The Faerie Queen*.

Moreover Oxford and Ormond were related through both of Ormond's marriages. Ormond's first wife, whom he married about 1559, was Elizabeth Berkeley (1534-1582), the daughter and heir of Thomas Berkeley (1505-1534), 6th Baron Berkeley, reputed 'the fairest that lived in the court'. Elizabeth Berkeley's brother, Henry Berkeley (1534-1613), 7th Baron Berkeley, in 1554 married Oxford's first cousin, Katherine Howard (d.1596), the daughter of Oxford's aunt, Frances de Vere (d.1577), and her husband Henry Howard (1516-1554), Earl of Surrey. After his first wife's death on 1 September 1582, Ormond remarried 'with indecent haste'. His second wife was Elizabeth (d. 1600), the daughter of Oxford's first cousin, John Sheffield (c.1538-1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield, the son of Edmund Sheffield (1521-1549), 1st Baron Sheffield, and his wife Anne de Vere (d.1572), the sister of Frances de Vere (d.1577). By his first marriage Ormond was thus the brother-in-law of Oxford's first cousin, Katherine Howard (d.1596), the daughter of Oxford's aunt, Frances de Vere (d.1577), while Ormond's second wife was the daughter of Oxford's first cousin, John Sheffield (c.1538-1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield, and the granddaughter of John Sheffield's mother, Oxford's aunt, Anne de Vere (d.1572). For the will of John Sheffield (c.1538-1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield, see TNA PROB 11/51, f. 1.

In the letter below Ormond mentions:

- his rival, Gerald fitz James Fitzgerald (c.1533-1583), 14th Earl of Desmond;
- the rebel James Fitzmaurice, the brother of Thomas Fitzmaurice (c.1502-1590), 16th Baron of Kerry and Lixnaw;
- Sir William Fitzwilliam (1526-1599), Lord Deputy of Ireland at the time;
- Gerald Fitzgerald (1525-1585), 11th Earl of Kildare, who had been arrested by the Lord Deputy on 8 May 1575 and sent to England (see the entry for him in the *ODNB*). For a letter dated 16 February 1577 written by Thomas Screven to Edward Manners (1549-1587), 3rd Earl of Rutland, speculating that Oxford's sister, Mary de Vere (d.1624)

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would marry Gerald Fitzgerald (1559-1580), the eldest son of Gerald Fitzgerald (1525-1585), 11th Earl of Kildare, see HMC Rutland, v. 1, p. 111.

Further details of Ormond's career at the English court as one of Queen Elizabeth's favourites and in Ireland are summarized in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online.

My very good Lord, I received your letter dated at St James the 17 of April this 9 of May, and where your Lordship writes I gave you more thanks than in power you could deserve, it is so that you shall indeed find me as thankful as either letter or word can declare, and for my service to my country and my goodwill to yourself, I would there were no more for you to doubt of.

If any report have been made of any ill dealing I should use to my wife, as your Lordship writes, and that you are glad of the contrary, I would the hearers of reports would not be faster led away to believe them than I hope you are, or than myself have or shall give cause, and for your sound advice that I should beware whom I trust about my wife, I humbly thank your Lordship. I would she were in the same case your daughter of Oxford is in, to whom I wish as well as any friend she and her husband hath, and would his hap had been to have seen one son of his afore he had taken his travel in hand, but no friend could persuade him from his will therein, whereof God send him to reap good. I am heartily glad he hath that honourable care of my Lady to beset her with tokens and letters in this time wherein kindness is most needful. God send him a good return, and after a settled mind to be here, as becometh.

I perceive by her Majesty's letter and your Lordship's she hath graciously accepted my advertisements. I will the best I may look unto the doings of th' Earl of Desmond and his followers. James Fitzmaurice and his companions, as I hear, be landed at St Malose [=St Malo].

I am sorry th' Earl of Kildare should be thought to stand in doubtful terms of duty. His cause will make the Earl of Desmond a melancholy man.

Hither was I sent for by my Lord Deputy in haste, and this day am to depart homeward.

What terms th' Earl of Desmond and his followers shall stand in your Lordship shall know as soon as I may. I will appoint a meeting with him of purpose.

I know my Lord Deputy hath so fully advertised of all matters here as I need not trouble your Lordship with mo' lines, wherefore I leave, and commit you to God, who make your life long and happy. From Dublin this 16 of May 1575.

Your Lordship's assured to command,

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Thomas Ormond

Truly my Lord Deputy hath very honourably dispatched many malefactors, and quieted the countries of this side the north very much thereby. He very well deserveth her Majesty's favour with many good parts of service.

Endorsed: 16o Maij 1575, the Earl of Ormond to my Lord from Dublin.