

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 7 March 1575 written by Dr Valentine Dale (c.1520–1589), the English ambassador in Paris, to Lord Burghley.

Oxford was then in Paris on his continental tour. Dr Dale states that he presented Oxford to the French King and Queen, who ‘used him honourably’, and ‘amongst other talk’ the King asked whether Oxford were married. Dr Dale responded that Oxford had ‘a fair Lady’. The King commented that Oxford and his Lady were then ‘vng beau couple’.

For further background on the situation at the French court at the time of Oxford’s arrival in Paris, see TNA SP 70/133, ff. 135-6.

Persons mentioned in Dr Dale’s letter in the order of their appearance include:

Benedict Spinola (1519/20–1580)

Henry III (1551-1589), born Alexandre Edouard de France, King of France from 1574 to 1589

Charles de Montmorency-Damville (1537-1612), Seigneur de Meru

Roger North (1531-1600), 2nd Baron North

Philippe Hurault (1528-1599), Comte de Cheverny

Claude de la Chastre

Louise of Lorraine (1553-1601), Queen consort of France from 1575 to 1589

Catherine de Medici (1519-1589), mother of King Henri III

Henri de Montmorency-Damville (1534-1614)

Louis de Bourbon (1513 -1582), 2nd Duke of Montpensier

My good Lord, I have been too much overcharged with this tedious voyage and long lying at Lyons. I have received by Mr Spinola from my departure from Paris to my return from Lyons, being but five months and an half, four thousand two hundred crowns besides 800 crowns which I was fain to take of another man. The ambassador of Spain hath a saying that ambassadors in France are eaten up by their horses, which they are constrained to keep in great number, and that continually, because of the uncertainty of the removing of this court. I would be as loath to seem to your Lordship excessive in anything as for the matter itself, and surely if mine own store or revenue would supply it,

I would pass it. Seeing it is as it is, I am constrained to beseech your Lordship to help it as well as it may be.

I have sent your Lordship a few notes to declare that the Queen's Majesty may reasonably avoid the confirmation of the league with the French King if it be required, not to take upon me to advise her Majesty what may be most expedient if it be her Majesty's pleasure to renew it, but only to show how far her Majesty is bound if her Majesty would avoid it. And if it be her Majesty's pleasure to have the matter enforced, there are divers allegations and authorities to be alleged very fully for the matter.

It hath been bruited that the Queen's Majesty hath given some aid of money unto Monsieur Meru, but now that rumour beginneth to wax cold.

With much ado I have recovered the books touching our merchants' causes which I delivered to the King at my Lord North's being here. Monsieur Cheverny hath charge to examine them. Now we shall try what will be done in those matters.

I understood by la Chastre which came to me ready to take his horse that he carried with him the acceptation of the peace. He said he had an act withal that the King had sworn to the observation of it, which if it be true is cunningly handled to be done *in absentia partis ita vt neq{ue} Regine constare possit nunc vere iuraverit et negari possit etiam res apud papisticos*. I had also the same day audience of the King, but he spake not one word to me of that particular matter, but in general terms of amity.

I presented my Lord of Oxford also unto the King and Queen, who used him honourably. Amongst other talk the King asked whether he were married. I said he had a fair Lady. *Il y a donc ce dict il vng beau couple*. Queen Mother *laborat caniaroidibus(?)*, and as yet giveth audience to none of the ambassadors.

There was a rumour spread for a day or two that Monsieur Damville had an overthrow, but now those news are waxen cold, and the direct contrary thought to be true.

I have had privy advertisement that there is a practice in hand against Rochelle. Whether it be by la Haye or by one that was given hostage into Rochelle by Monsieur Montpensier for Lusignan, who is now come to the court, or otherwise I cannot learn.

And thus always beseeching Almighty God to continue your Lordship in good health, I take my leave of your Lordship in most humble manner from Paris the 7th of March 1574.

Your Lordship's most humble, Valentyne Dale