

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 23 March 1575 written by Dr Valentine Dale (c.1520–1589), the English ambassador in Paris, to Lord Burghley.

Oxford was in Paris on his continental tour, and had been presented by Dr Dale to the French King and Queen on 5 March. Oxford left Paris on 16 March (see TNA SP 70/133, f. 186). It appears from the letter below that Oxford departed from Paris in the company of William Lewin, and that Oxford's man, Booth, was to follow on or about 25 March. This servant appears to be the William Booth mentioned in Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley of 27 November 1575 (see CP 8/76).

It appears from Dr Dale's comments that Lord Burghley had written certain things to Lewin which he did not wish Oxford to see:

I was in doubt whether I should send Mr Lewin's letter to him, or send them back again to your Lordship. Considering the words of your Lordship's letter that your Lordship would not have the delivery of it(?) be seen by any as from your Lordship, I supposed it would answer to the meaning of your Lordship if I did enclose it in a letter to Mr Lewin from myself, and not as from your Lordship, and so I did. I pray your Lordship of pardon if I have mistaken your Lordship's meaning.

Dr Dale's remarks concerning Lady Burghley, his own wife, Elizabeth Dale, and Oxford's wife Anne are obscure, but it appears that prior to Oxford's departure from Paris, Elizabeth Dale had assured Oxford that since she herself, a woman, had survived two winter journeys on the continent following the French court, Oxford, being a 'lustly gentleman' and proceeding at his own pace, would eventually return to England safe and sound. This 'comfort', which apparently made Oxford blush, was then included by Dr Dale in his letter in return for 'favour' from Lady Burghley so that it could be passed on to her daughter, Oxford's wife, Anne:

My wife and I have none other service to do to my Lady for her good favour but to send her that comfort which we promised my Lord of Oxford at his departure to send to my Lady Countess from my wife, that she may have good hope to see my Lord well and safely to return by God's grace without any doubt since my wife, being a woman, hath passed a couple of cumbersome journeys following this unorderly court two winters together, first into Lorraine and then from Lyons, my Lord being so lusty a gentleman and going at his ease, whereat my Lord blushed modestly, and seemed to rejoice.

According to other documents, the slain man mentioned in the letter was in the service of Charles de Montmorency-Damville (1537-1612), Seigneur de Meru. There was suspicion in France that Queen Elizabeth had secretly aided Meru financially. This may explain Dr Dale's concern about what might have been 'picked out' of the slain man's 'tables'.

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:

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

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

William Lewin (d. 1598)

Elizabeth [nee Forth] Dale (d.1590)

Mildred Cecil (1526–1589), Lady Burghley

Anne de Vere [nee Cecil] (1556-1588), Countess of Oxford

Francois-Hercules (1555-1584), Duke of Alencon, brother of King Henri III, styled 'Monsieur'

Henri de Bourbon (1552-1588), Prince of Conde

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

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

Elisabeth of Austria (1554-1592), Queen consort of France from 1570 to 1574

My good Lord, this bearer was to depart at the receipt of your Lordship's letters, for the which I thank your Lordship most humbly, so that I have no further to advertise your Lordship but of such things as are [] and in the packet, saving for answer to your Lordship's letters, the contents whereof such as are to be executed I will see to be done with as much care as possibly I may, and surely nothing is or can be more to my contentment *quam studiu{m} erga te meu{m} a te probari(?)*, having nothing to dedicate to your Lordship but my poor constant thankful heart.

The handling of the matter your Lordship writeth of falleth out unhappily for letting of things that might be done at this time, and I know not what is picked out of his tables that is slayed nor of the man himself, but some are already apprehended. I will use as much diligence as I can to prevent inconvenients.

Surely I suppose the King of Spain's ambassador here and the Comendador have done their goodwill to bring things to the pass they are in. And I think somewhat hath proceeded of speeches which I have used to this ambassador to persuade him to purge

such matter as did breed jealousy, whereof I do understand he hath carefully advertised the Comendador.

If the Queen's Majesty's pleasure be to be informed or that your Lordship would know what her Majesty is bound to do in this case of the renovation of the treaty, I have as large and as full and express books for the matter as ever I had in any case in my life, and indeed there is nor law nor reason that the Queen should be bound unless the King would renew the Edict of Pacification and other things which were in force at the time of the treaty. And surely I cannot reach to understand whether it be sincerely meant of this side, or else to try the Queen's Majesty, to make the refusal to proceed of the Queen's Majesty's part. And well I wot it was not meant when my Lord North was at Lyons, whatsoever these new accidents have bred(?) since. And when hath it been seen that a treaty should be sworn *in absentia partis*?

I will assure your Lordship unfeignedly my Lord of Oxford used himself as orderly and moderately as might be desired, and with great commendation, neither is there any apparence of the likelihood of any other. God send him a Raphael always in his company, which I trust verily he hath, for Mr Lewin is both discreet and of good years, and one that my Lord doth respect. I have delivered your Lordship's letter to my Lord unto Booth, his man, who goeth after my Lord within this two days. I was in doubt whether I should send Mr Lewin's letter to him, or send them back again to your Lordship. Considering the words of your Lordship's letter that your Lordship would not have the delivery of it(?) be seen by any as from your Lordship, I supposed it would answer to the meaning of your Lordship if I did enclose it in a letter to Mr Lewin from myself, and not as from your Lordship, and so I did. I pray your Lordship of pardon if I have mistaken your Lordship's meaning.

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And thus having no other thing to your Lordship at this present, I beseech Almighty God to preserve your Lordship in good health. From Paris the 23rd of March 1574.

Your Lordship's most humble, Valentyne Dale

The King is made believe his brother hath had intelligence with the Prince of Conde about an enterprise which the Prince hath had of late about Compeigne, and so the jealousies wax daily, and there are that advise the King to make himself assured of his brother. Queen Mother is marvelously vexed with these matters, and as I am certainly advertised is resolved that there can be no better way to piece up these griefs than by

some patched peace, and therefore the deputies may make their bargain the better if it be well handled. Here hath been revel in this court. Queen Mother hath procured the Queen's maidens and women to be put away from her upon the sudden upon pretense that the like was done to the Emperor's daughter, but in truth because they were instruments for the Guises. For this the Queen kept her bed, and much ado there hath been, but hitherto Queen Mother hath her will.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England; (2) 23 March 1574, D{octor} Dale to my Lord from Paris