

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 31 March 1576 written by Dr Valentine Dale (c.1520–1589), the English ambassador in Paris, to Lord Burghley. As Dr Dale notes, Oxford was in Paris awaiting Walsingham's arrival before returning to England after his continental tour.

The situation in France was dire. King Henri III's younger brother, the Duke of Alençon (styled 'Monsieur'), had escaped from court on 15 September of the previous year. At the same time the Prince of Conde and John Casimir had signed a treaty by which Conde agreed to provide 16,000 troops for an invasion of France. Catherine de Medici negotiated a 7-month treaty with her son, Alençon, which was signed on 21 November 1575. However Alençon had no control over Conde and John Casimir, and in December their army of 20,000 men crossed the Meuse, taking the King, who had not prepared for war, completely by surprise. He was forced to stand by helplessly as the army pillaged Burgundy. Alençon, seeing his advantage, repudiated the truce in December, and went to Villefranche where he was joined by Turenne with 3000 arquebusiers and 400 horse. On 5 February 1576, Henry of Navarre also escaped from court, and repudiated Catholicism. Two weeks later a delegation representing Navarre, Alençon, Conde and Damville presented 93 articles to the King, demanding the free exercise of the Protestant religion throughout France and many other concessions. The King was unable to oppose the forces arrayed against him. Alençon and Conde joined at Moulins. John Casimir and most of his German reiters were camped nearby. Navarre and his troops were in Poitou. Alençon was being pressured to march on Paris.

It was in the midst of this tense and dangerous situation that Oxford returned to Paris at the end of March 1576, passing the armed camps on his way.

For the foregoing, see Knecht, R.J., *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France 1483-1610* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 406-7.

The William Russell who arrived in Paris with Oxford was William Russell (c.1553–1613), later 1st Baron Russell of Thornhaugh, and Lord Deputy of Ireland. For his licence to travel for three years, see TNA E 157/1, f. 1. For an earlier letter dated 16 April 1575 mentioning William Russell's arrival in Venice see Rigg, J.M., ed., *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs Preserved Principally at Rome in the Vatican Archives and Library*, Vol. II, 1572-1578, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), p. 203. See also <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=92625>.

My good Lord, I do send Mr Secretaries in this dispatch the copy of the mitigation of Monsieur's demands, and the copy of the agreement between the Prince of Conde and Casimir which is come to light here by occasion that the deputies do demand that agreement to be performed, which the King required to see, and now it is seen. The King is further from the peace than he was before, yet he requireth prorogation of the truce for a month, but Monsieur hath prorogued it but for 8 days, which end the 23rd of April. In

the meantime the Duke's camp is passed over the river of Loire again hitherwards, part at Decize, part beneath Nevers upon boats, and are coming towards La Charite. The King hath scattered his army, and is gone abroad to pass the time. The King of Navarre hath been reported to be dead, but he is in Poitou, assembling of forces daily.

If the Queen's Majesty do send any personage, one or moe hither, it would do well they had commission, *Ad agendu{m} tractandu{m} et transigendu{m} cu{m} rege, Regine eius matre, Duce Alenconio, Duce Cassimire, Principe Condeo, hominibus reformat(?) religionis et Catholicis eoru{m} Socijs ac eoru{m} Deputatis de pace ac facis rationibus incundis, et eoru{m} controuersijs*, for there is imperfection in some of their doings here for lack of commission.

My Lord of Oxford hath passed through all the camp very well, and is arrived here in very good health, and Mr William Russell with him. It seemeth this year hath been a time well bestowed by him.

LM: I think his Lordship doth stay until the coming of her Majesty's ambassador.

The rest it may please your Lordship to read in my letters to Mr Secretaries. And thus I beseech Almighty God long to preserve your Lordship in good health. From Paris the last of March 1576.

Your Lordship's most humble, Valentyne Dale

I have sent your Lordship two pieces of wine of Beaune, which is our special wine of this country, very hard to come by here for it is brought hither almost 40 leagues by land and by water almost as far as Chalons. I could get none of it the last year, yet I was there myself in the voyage of the King from Lyon to Rheims.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England; (2) vlt{imo} Mart{ij} 1576, Mr D{octor} Dale to my Lord, prorogation of the truce for 8 days, th' Earl of Oxford's arrival