

'THE LETTER OF ESTATE': AN ELIZABETHAN LIBEL

ONE of the most influential figures in the Court of Queen Elizabeth I was Robert Dudley (1532?-88), the Earl of Leicester, long a major power in the Privy Council and at one point the commander of the English forces in the Netherlands. Not the least important task in reconstructing his career and assessing his rôle in Court politics involves the study of numerous contemporary defamations written against him, both in order to determine the degree of truth in their accusations and to understand how a responsible officer of state could have woven such a black legend about his life. The mass of material is quite large, but interest in anti-Leicestrian propaganda centres about the printed tract known as *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), written by several Catholic ex-courtiers, principally Charles Arundell (1540-87), living in exile in Paris.¹ Most of the other major documents can be considered derivative in varying degrees from this *opus*,² though stray pieces continue to be found.

Amongst the state papers in the Public Record Office there is another short libel which holds interest for anyone studying Leicester's career. The manuscript 'Letter of Estate' was first noticed by John Bruce, who considered it to be 'one of the early forms' of the *Commonwealth* itself.³ In 1919, the Jesuit scholars Pollen and McMahon printed two brief extracts from it in their volume on the life of *The Ven. Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel*, and in their introductory remarks they asserted quite positively that 'there is no doubt that the manuscript is earlier than the printed book'.⁴ This judgement was adopted by T. W. Baldwin in his argument for a 1583 dating of Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy*.⁵ As Fredson Bowers had demonstrated in 1931, the Pedringano incident in the play (chiefly Act III, scenes 3, 4, and 6) bears marked similarity to the Gates episode in the *Commonwealth*,⁶ but Baldwin maintained that the 'Letter of Estate's' adventure of the Yorkshire gentleman, which he printed, is even closer. Assuming a direct borrowing from play to manuscript to printed book, he concluded that Kyd's play must have been on the boards before Charles Arundell fled England in November 1583.

The relative dating of book and manuscript has been studied, however, and it is quite clear that the 'Letter of Estate' did not precede the *Commonwealth*.⁷ In the *Commonwealth*, to cite only the most telling point, Leicester's son by Lady Essex is thrice spoken of as alive, whereas in the 'Letter' his death (on 19 July 1584) is applied to moral use. But, although it does contain potentially useful anecdotes which do not appear in the *Commonwealth*, such as those concerning the Countess of Essex's pride and Leicester's ear being boxed for his presumption, one can scarcely imagine that the 'Letter' would have been very attractive as a source in any case. As Fr. Pollen pointed out, the two tracts do treat of several of the same subjects, but as he did not point out, they are treated in entirely different ways, and there is in all but one of them little sign of any common tradition: the *Commonwealth's* account of the fall of the Duke of Norfolk, for example, focuses almost entirely upon the year 1569 and the Duke's first entanglement, whereas the 'Letter' concentrates upon 1572, the year of execution, and includes an almost martyrological report of the Duke's scaffold eloquence. Likewise, the reports of the murder of Amy Robsart and of the poisoning of the Earl of Essex preserve essentially different traditions. Whereas the printed book reveals a high degree of accurate detailed knowledge of recent events, the 'Letter' is apparently the work of an outsider, a man capable of associating Amy Robsart's death (1560) and that of the Earl of Essex (1576) as parts of a single conspiracy, capable of confusing the sequence of events

surrounding Norfolk's fall and the Northern Rebellion, of calling Leicester's son (who was styled Lord Denbigh by courtesy) 'the young Earl of Denbigh'.

Nonetheless, there is evidently some relationship between the two tracts. The manuscript's title reflects the *Commonwealth's* running-title, 'A Letter of State of a Scholar of Cambridge', and verisimilitude has been sought for the epistolary disguise by directing the manuscript to a friend in Gracious (Gracechurch) Street, near London Bridge, an address employed in the *Commonwealth* and later in Walpole and Parson's *Newes from Spaine and Holland* (1593). The 'Letter' also begins with what may be called a 'dialogue setting' similar to the *Commonwealth's*, but in the manuscript the narrative is not in fact carried out in dialogue form. And there is one anecdote which is shared by both tracts in very similar versions, though with no evidence of verbal borrowing: that is, the story of Dudley's cruel jest upon the Earl of Arundel's 'ramping horse' crest. Fr. Pollen, in printing these as 'parallel passages', ascribed the two chief discrepancies (that Arundel is called a Privy Councillor, and is said to have been imprisoned in the Tower) to the *Commonwealth's* error, but actually there is no error. The 'Letter's' story is told of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Philip Howard, the present Earl of Arundel in 1585, whereas the *Commonwealth's* is told, as it clearly indicates, of 'Duke Dudley', Leicester's father, and Henry Eitzalan, Philip's predecessor in the Arundel title, who had indeed been a Councillor and had been imprisoned in the Tower in 1551-2. One might suppose that the 'Letter's' author found in the *Commonwealth* a story traditionally told of the elder Dudley, and simply brought it to bear upon Leicester himself, his more immediate target.

Having said that the 'Letter of Estate' is neither a source for nor an early draft of the *Commonwealth*, we must try to say what it is. It is a crude and old-fashioned tract which shows signs of having been influenced by the printed book yet is generally to be regarded as independent of it. Our best guess would be that at some point, probably soon after the appearance of the *Commonwealth* in autumn 1584, someone decided to write his own libel against Leicester, making use of largely independent anecdotes and grievances, and that he sought in various ways to identify his product with what may have been something of a 'Commonwealth tradition', just as aspiring writers of poetical tragedies sometimes tried to continue the tradition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. There is no reason to believe that this author had any connection with the *Commonwealth's* own promoters; though there is ample evidence that the exiled courtiers planned a continuing campaign of defamation against the Earl, the 'Letter' could scarcely have come from them, as it rehearses many of the old general charges with little new information included, it makes mistakes that the *Commonwealth's* authors could not have made, and its unpolished style is altogether different from the *Commonwealth's*. Furthermore, the two books differ considerably in technique – the 'Letter's' charges are quite vague, whereas the printed book proceeds by accumulation of names, places, and personal testimonies – and they differ in many of their attitudes: the 'Letter', for example, though like the *Commonwealth* it shows great solicitude for the noblemen oppressed by Leicester, seems (unlike the *Commonwealth*) to have little sympathy for courtiers *per se*. Its author may well have been attached to the Court (since he refers to the Court as 'here'), but he writes like a countryman up on the gossip. Although his feeling for Norfolk suggests some connection with the Howard clan, he seems not particularly Roman Catholic in his perspective. Since he shows himself well aware of the *Commonwealth* of late 1584, but makes no mention of Leicester's military adventures in the Netherlands (which commenced in early 1586), as later libels did not fail to do, we may assume 1585 to be a very probable date of composition.

Despite its crudeness, the ‘Letter’ is quite an interesting work and contains much material for study of the Leicester legend. It exists now in a unique manuscript copy of an earlier original.⁸ Besides two brief extracts printed by Pollen and another by Baldwin, all containing minor inaccuracies, it is here reproduced for the first time. The manuscript is in a badly damaged state, and has recently been further damaged, to the loss of approximately 15-20% of intelligible matter, by having been mounted in the Public Record Office to prevent further degeneration. The present text, however, is based both upon the manuscript itself and upon a microfilm made of it in October 1930, which has permitted the reconstruction of a much fuller text than would otherwise now be possible. I have tried to supply conjectural words and phrases in square brackets for matter now lost, by means of substitutions intended to be of the same length as the missing portions, in order to carry the sense as well as possible, and when I have added words where no loss exists in the manuscript I have used brackets and italics. Brackets are also used to signal the beginning of a new page of the original. Conventional abbreviations have been silently expanded, and for proper names I have supplied capital initials. I have added punctuation – the original has none – and have on occasion supplied paragraphing, but a few words carelessly repeated by the copyist I have let remain.

[Title page]

Letter of estate sent too his freende HR in Gracious Strete, where in is laide open the pract[ices and d]evices of Robert Sutton alies D[udley, Earl of L]eicester, his packinge with [England’s enemies ab]road, his intrappinge of the [Duke of Norfolk,] his rapines, m[urders] and sed[itious treache]ries; with other his d[etestable and] abhominable actions, odius in the [sight] bothe of God and mann, laide open by [way] of sircumlocutione.

[fol. 369] A leter of estate sent to his frend HR in Gracious Strete, wherein is laide open the practices and devises of Robert Sutton alies Dudlie, Erle of Leicester.⁹

[Dear friend, having been] overcome with thy importunitie, I have [thought good to send] unto the the some of such private talke and [conference had at our] laste beinge togeth[er] in Gracious Strete. [I do so willingly,] settinge aside all f[ear] or regarde of [any] perill or daunger may growe thereby, but with this esspetiall charge unto the, that thou in any wise be careff[ul] with whoe and to whome thou dost participate any parte or parcell of the same. Neyther lives the mann besides thy selfe for whose sake I wolde so far indanger my selfe as by [the] manifestinge of the same bringe my selfe within the [reach] of his clawes, knowing full well that on whome[soev]er they light they perce so depe as they never [re]cover after, and therefor thou canst not bee to carefull of the participatinge of the same. For although hee seme chained to a raged poste and musseled,¹⁰ because hee should not bight, yett hath hee so unlinked and unmoseled him selfe as where hee bightes the remedie is curelesse, and with his chaine [so rang]es in the corte as therwith hee affrightes [all the] reste of the beastes, in such manner that some hee [thought] littell once to be moved they all of them [have crept ha]sty to there denes, daringe not once [even to] thruste forth there heades until such [time as] his ire and wrath bee appesed. [fol. 369v] For that in his chaine hee leades the princly lion anie waie semes beste to his owne luste and likinge. Withall in moste suttell and polliticke sorte [in his] bearescinn hee hath soed the foxis taile with [salt] and raignes in such lionlike sorte as daily hee doth, prieing through his clawes in to other mens actio[ns without] makinge any acquainted with an[y actions] of his.¹¹ And ther[efore] once againe I instan[tly urge you] to bee carefull [with] whom thou acqu[aint this matter,] leaste att any [time] the same should [become known,] for that [in almost] every corner hee hath [spies and agents, each with] some claw both [to rend and tear. And he] beinge so sawsie with the exer[cise thereof as to let] us verifie the ould proverbe, that (*quod* [. . .]) and that (*non est bonum ludere cum sanctis*

[*rebus*) a] prayer shall ever bee from such a saint as he [is *Laus*] *domine*). But take hede, I advise the, for hee [has an ear] longer then ever Kinge Midas was, reach[ing all the way] to St. Michels Mounte,¹² kepinge birds that [bring] him newes in his eares as hee sitts att table [at] diner or supper from all costes and quarters [of the] lande, which birdes are fead neyther with [. . .] nor hempe sede, but with sede that [is found in the] farr Weste cuntry, where the people go [for the most] parte naked, and is sente to their master [with] the same as a speciall token [of their great] good will and longe continu[ance of the same.]¹³ And I tell thee, the force and [power of gold are such] that for the love and d[esire of the same] a mann will not stick [to betray everything] unto the very enemies [and adversaries of; fol. 370] his homebred and naturall cuntry, as to many examples att this day make manifest. And now beinge well warnde I hope thou art well armde, for hee that shall deale with so pollitick an enemmie had nede [to] bee well provided, I tell thee, for were his fight by plaine strength and manhod it were no difficult matter to [overpower] him, but all his fight is by Machivels pol[icy, to the] death, and yet never makes [open show, which is the most] dangerus fight that may bee, and [so thou must take] hede to be shrewed. And as [touching] that which so much thou desireste, which in as breeffe manner as I may, and as nere as my memory will permitt, I will truly and plainly sett thee downe, which was in manner and forme as foloeth.

[fol. 370v blank; fol. 371] Havinge well dined and sittinge in the parlor afore a good fier, the tyme of yeare so requiringe, much diversitie of talke was ministred of divers kindes and sondry matters, but esspetially of one more than all the reste, which was of the great porte, swaie, and countenance the Erle of Leicester bare in the corte, wherein so many menn, so many mindes, [are subjected] to his high wisdom and pollecie [because of the] greate favor of hir Majestie, and some to [talk to one,] some to another, whene one QL, [a man of hone]ste and of judgment more than [all] the [rest,] enteringe into his depeste secretes and discoveringe his flowere pott of Machivell stratagemes and Aritenicall practices,¹⁴ and enteringe into his depeste reaches, and withall seminge to wonder from whence so great a tree should so sodenly sproute as to overshadowe all the trees in the corte; and enteringe likewise into his stocke and progeney from whence hee was decended, founde him to bee the sonne, and that the yongeste, of no better mann then an archtraytor who in hir Majesties sisters ragne was for his ambition and [pride] cutt shorter by the head,¹⁵ and the sonne att [that time] knowinge him selfe guilty of his fathers [crimes,] more likere indede to a fox then a beare, [hid his] hed into a hole, not once daringe to [show the] same forth untill such tyme as hee [might slink a]waie [to be saved; fol. 371v] by that thrice noble duke the Duke of Norfolke, too whome in most base mannor the wreach came crep[ing] prostrate on the ground, besechinge his grace to bee a meane if it were possible for the preservation [of his] life. Whose wretched case this noble duke pitieing, as one all waies preste to helpe the distressed, in fine so labored with [Queen Mary] that, that which the [traitor] leaste lookte for, he [successfully obtain]s a pardon for [his] treacherus life, which [he hath now] full well requited, provinge the [cause] of the dukes confution.¹⁶ For now beinge [no longer kept] in presonn, where afore for his life he durste not s[how] his face, hee secretly in his mischivus brayne conspires the subversion of him which had saved his life, for havinge [an a]spiringe minde of his owne, tristinge after digni[ties, sw]aie, and authoritie, and knowinge the nature [of the] noble duke to be clenne opposite and contrary to such, and that duringe his life it was not p[ossible] for him to atchive his conceaved enterprise, [he plots] and imagines in his wicked brain all me[ans and] waies that might be to remove this stomb[ling block.] Now knowinge the duke to bee rially d[escended and] of high parentage and gen[tility, and of the] nobles and commones not one o[f higher birth yet] livde, [*not*] seasinge to buz in his [ear many] fantasticall prophesies unto h[im about the] Howardes belonginge w[ithin the royal family, he entangled the] duke through the first [evil advice; fol. 372] and wicked counsell of

this accursed and vild Achittophell,¹⁷ as enteringe into the Scottish Queenes title and contractinge matrimony with the same Scottish Queene, with heynous matteres of high consequence farr above his reach and capassetie, [contr]ary and opposite to the statutes & laws [of the rea]lme; as beinge called for the [same to account] and by sufficient prooffe and [evidence convicte]d, to the great hartes sorowe of [all the nobles and] commons, [*Norfolk*] was for the same of high treason condemned, where in he had no so great an enemie as this vilde wreach, whose life hee beefore had saved, as a fatall instrument of his owne confution. For had the noble duke sofered him as hee worthely merited to [have] received the rewarde of his treasons, he [neve]r had lived to have intangled as hee did [the] noble duke in such a laborinth, where out bee could never untwinde him selfe with out the losse of his dearest blud as a fore said.

And yet was hir Majestie of hir mercie and clemensie, att the intreaty of the nobillitie, who greatly bewailed [this] mischance, fully determined to have pardoned [the duke] of the fatall sentence of death paste a[gainst him,] which this vilde wreach greatly [fearing,] knowinge in what treacherus mannor [he had de]alt and that then in some measure [the Duke might] in tyme cry quittance with him, [fol. 372v] confederates with one that shalbe nameless about the dukes presente and spedy execution. And yett they knewe there was a bore in the land duringe whose presence no such thinge co[uld] bee putt in execution. And therefore most politticly under the [co]llor of an embassage the determined to [send him] packinge til there drifte w[as accomplished, vo]winge w[ith] greate othes and [vows tha]t duringe [his] absence no such thing [should be] attempted.¹⁸ But the noble man was scante there ent[er]ed in to the sea when with all dilligence th[ey] put there pretended purpose in practise, procuringe with all spede a warrante as [from] hir Majestie unto the shirifes and majistrate[s of] the cittie the night afore the dukes exec[ution] that not any eyther masters or servantes sho[uld dare] once to stur forth of there dores afore ten [of the] clocke the next day att the leaste, [and] the lanes and stretes ende towards the [Tower] to bee kepte and garded with [soldiers;] whereas contrary wise, not[withstanding this] great commande, there was [assembled at] seaven a clocke the sa[me morning] uppon the Tower Hill [to witness] this lamentable spec[tacle more than] tenn thousand people [gathered there; fol. 373], when as had the duke but held upp his finger, as one not willinge to have sofered what hee did, all the force there, had it bine tenn tymes more, had not bine sufficiente to h[ave] performed that which att that tyme with quietness they executed. But his patience in sofering made plai[n declara]tion how farr hee was frome th[inking of an]y such matter, for when hee c[ame to] the Tower Hill and vude the huge [gathering] of people assembled as one which the feare of death nowhit appauled, with cherefull countenance tornes him sell towards them & hartely praies and instantly desires them that now in his passage out of th[is wor]ld and life full of cares, sorowe, and misery in to a life full of joy and heavenly bliss they wolde not by there clamore or any other meanes be any occation of disturbance unto him, but quietly to sofer him to pass forth of the same. Only these fewe wordes hee had to say unto them for the cleringe of that false rumor wente uppon him, which was that where as hee was noted too [be a] great favorer of papistes and also him[self] to be no other, they greatly wronged him [and lie]d of him, and that hee hoped [not for the joi]es of salvation but by the [mercy of] Christe only.

[fol. 373v] And thereof hee desired them all to bee witnises, and then turninge him selfe towards the nobillitie desired them to comende him [to] his good lady and mistress [*Queen Elizabeth*] whom he so greivusly had offended and to desire hir to stande good lady to [his] children, who th[rough] his folly and [ambition woul]d be left in the world as orp[hans] without any] guide u[nless] hir Majestie of hir accust[omed cle]mensie did protecte them under the s[afety of her] winges. And so takinge those which were nex[t] him by th[e] hande,

and the reste by gesture whome hee could not reach to, lovingly and kindly tooke [his] leave of them all, and then torninge him[sel]fe towards the executioner franckly and free[ly] forgave him his death as hee him selfe w[ished to] bee forgiven, and after his prayers saide, m[ee]kly and willingly kneled downe on the scaffo[ld] and receaved death with the strock of an [axe,] committinge his soule in to the handes of h[is God] and his body to be inteeded in yearth. Att which wofull spectacle were more w[ee]ping then ever was scene in that place [nor ever] is like to bee sene againe, all [of them] generally lamentinge that [unfortunate and] wofull accident.¹⁹

[fol. 374] But this was that which his Lordship expected and with such greedy appetite sought after, knowinge full well as if that house should have f[lourish]ed it had in no manner bine possible for him to have [in]sulted in such lordly and princly sorte as now hee doth. And th[us now ha]vinge rid this stomblinge blocke out [of his path,] as his chefeste lett, stay, and h[indrance, his Lordship,] to clere the coste of the [last restraint, who,] *the Earl of Northumberland*,²⁰ was a whospurr in [the North and one] that might as ill indure his surquedry²¹ as the other, castes in his braines all practices & devises to bringe him within the compasse of his bowe. But alas, he neded not have caste so far about for that bird, nor ye[t ha]ve angled so depe for that fish that [of] his owne accord was to ready preste [to e]nter in to the nett of disobedience and rebellion againste his prince and native cuntry, drawinge in like mannor in to his traiterous sosietie one²² that in every degree might have checte mate with his Lordship and bine [his] rrivall in each resspecte, whoe while [they] were faithfull, true, and loiall livid [more as] princes then subjectes, in no smale [harmony and fai]the with their prince and [sovereign. fol. 374v] But as the state of subjectes could not content them, but that with Lucifer they muste nedes [con]spire againste there hed, prince, and govern[or, so] in there downfall moste plainly apperes [the] ende of all false traiters and treason. [For] one of them s[uffered a most]e worthely merited death for [his treason] and treache[ry at] Yorke the *22nd of August 1572*, [the other escaped] with life, yet inforced to lead a life [far worse] then death, exiled forth off his n[ativ]e cuntry to wander in a forraine enemies of the same, [hi]s treasons and treacherie caste every daye [in his] nose by the basest and rascalste kinde of [peo]ple as a fitt posie for a traytor to smell, and uppone complainte there of, lafte [at] and scorned as one that loveth treason [and playing] the traitor, besides the perpetuall staine to [be] never likely to be restored.²³ Where[as if they might] have bine contented to have lived [quietly] in truth and loialty as they ought to [have done] in credit and honnor, they mi[ght have lived] furth there daies as any [the greatest of] peres who so ever. But [by this] wee may bee hould [the fruits of sedition.]

[fol. 375] And now the corte beinge rid of these states and none left that might controwle him in ought, his Lordship beegan to lifte upp his hed and pretendes to bringe no smale matters to passe, s[o p]resently hee so insinuates with hir Majestie that presently hee getes th[e great] office of the one, beinge the principalste office [of the Court,] and likewise the most parte of [the other,] beinge by reason of his treasons [deprived of his offices.]²⁴ And growinge every day in more [favor] then other, [*Leicester*] thought hee might attempte any thing what so ever, and beinge wedded to a ve[rtuo]us lady decended of a noble and honorable house and by birth by many degrees his bette[r, and] his luste caringe him to the une [woma]n in his eies seminge more beutyful, like Davide, but never repentinge with David, [*he*] lustes after Barseabe, Uriases wife,²⁵ and makes no consience to attaine the same to make awaie his owne deare lovinge lady, who for hir vertue, truth, and loialty deserves a far better lorde then hee. But [lost]e in lawless luste as a fore said, after some [conference] had with Dame Lettice his love concer[ning so importa]nt and waiete [i.e., weighty] a matter, they [both of them]

betwixt them conspired the [fol. 375v] the death of each others weded phere,²⁶ and [his] good lady to bee the firste, which hee full sone [effected] as folloeth.

The good lady beinge att hir [house in] the cuntry, full slenderly accompanied, as one [meant] towards smale goode, hir lord seldome or never vis[iting] hir, this lamentable inc[ident o]ne day fell out. As too of hir gentill se[rvants were in the] parlor playing att tables²⁷ for there [recreation, as] also to pass [the] tyme awaie withal, [they pause in] ther [talk] and to there plaine hearinge someth[ing falls] downe the stairs, whereat the [one] jesting saies to the other downe for a shillinge, the other lik[ewi]se merely ansuringe upp for another. And so [they continue]d in playinge there game untill the same [was] finish[ed] and ended, littell suspectinge what was fal[len.] And now there game beinge come [to an] ende, and hearinge no body make any [move to] take upp what was fallen, one of them stepe[d to the] staires foote to see what it should bee. W[hat to their] appauled sperites there appered unto them, the corpes of that noble lady without breath, se[eming to have] hir necke bone broke in sunder, th[e murderers escaped] and gonn paste hue and [cry, who for] the rewarde of ther [evil labors may] the Lorde throwe do[wn vengeance from; fol. 376] above uppon so foule and wicked murthers, as allso on him which sett them a worke, to his perpetuall reproach and infamy. But now to color [the] matter withall, moste falsly and slanderusly it [is] geaven forth that she fell by chaunce downe the staires and brake h[er neck, which is] a likely matter, a lady to fall downe [the stair]es and never hard cry, hir necke to [be broken but with no] blud spilt.²⁸ But his Lordship said [so, and then] who durste say the contr[ary.] Much mutte[ring] there was about this soden death of hers, but [no] mann durste say a woord for his life.

And well had it bine if there hee had staid, but hee proceded to an other which was farr more worse, which was the death of that noble earle the [most val]iante Earle of Essex, who for his truth, [honesty,] and loialtie was by hir Majestie appointed Lord Deputie of Irelande,²⁹ in which high office hee bare himselfe so uprightly, administringe justice tempered with mercie, that both of high and lowe hee was generally beloved, and wished if it had bine possible his office to have bine perpetuall, such hartly good will they bore unto him. [And] therefore hee [*Leicester*] was driven unto his uttermoste [reaches] to effect that which in his bluddy minde [he had con]trived, which seinge that as he wold [hardly br]inge to passe for that hee in all [fol. 376v] in all his actions hee [*Essex*] bore him selfe so honnorable that without it were performed by some meanes o[ther,] all his devises wolde come to naught, so as which w[ith Essex] him selfe, well hee knew nott to fight w[ith this] good cushin knight.³⁰ Better durste hee [*Leicester*] take [a tiger] by the tonge then e[ver] to loke him in the fa[ce in] the felde. What then [could he use to] doe that w[hich him]selfe durste not [attempt,] that was w[ish]ed to bee done. But [his Lordship] had an o[ther] tutor that wold fully and [with great cunn]ging inst[ruct] him how and which waies were be[st to] attempte [this] wicked, horrible, and hanyus acte that to the w[orld] mighte be leste apparente. And after many devises [and practi]ces put in ure for the accomplishinge of ther [purpose,] there could no waie be so fittly found out and [be] so agreeable with his nature as by [poison] to rid the noble earle of his life, which eve[ntually] to all Englandes great greffe he perfor[m]ed, so that] hee whome for his life hee durst [not even look] in the face hee crullely murthers f[rom three hundred] miles of.³¹ So as sodenly the noble earle [was taken] of a disease in all menns judgment [thought to be] uncurable, in so much as all [the doctors in] Ireland were sought for d[rugs and other means] to ease him of his p[ain, but all for naught; fol. 377] were there potions ministered and all for nought were there labors beestowed, there druges procuringe him littell reste, insomuch as the worste that might bee beinge feared, hir Majestie with all sped [was] informed thereof, so as it brought no smale he[aviness] to the corte, where hee was not a littell nor meanly beloved, a[nd by her] Majestie the moste of all, who greatly greav[ed that

when] moste occation was to use him hee sh[ould die, and at] hir losinge all once a spetiall [friend, a] lovinge subjecte, and a trusty counsellor; [but] *in mortis nihill prodest*, and therefore to be [borne] as paciently as might be. But still the noble earles languishment encreased, notwithstanding all the helpe that was procured. And now drawinge nere to the ende of his corse and s[eeing th]ere was no waie with him but one, [*Essex*] provided [him]selfe accordingly, and settinge all thinges in as good [or]der as his weake state wold att that tyme permitt him, with cherefull hart and willinge minde yealded upp his soule unto the handes of his maker, there to remaine in perpetuall joy, and his body to be intered in the yearth with such honnor as thereto apperteined, his innocent blud [cr]ieinge w[. . .]bles for revenge uppon the falce [and wick]ed murthere[r]s. But when the newes thereof [reached the] corte, many a wepinge ie was shed [there,] but had they knowne the mannor [fol. 377v] of his death and by whome and what meanes the same was effected, no doubt the wold with swordes and gleyeves³² have hewd him in to a thousand gobbetes. Great [weep]inge in the corte there was and his Lordship a[mong]ste the reste made the sorowefulest countenance, [ri]ghtly representinge the crockodiles parte that weepes [for] that hee wold fainest devowre. And what did, I [pray] you, Dame Lettice hi[rself but appea]red I warrante [you] in blacke to the world, [but yet con]ceaved no smale contente, for that she might [now in spit]e of any[body] openly injoy that which so long [she had already]e poss[essed.] Much talke there was muttered in [every] corner, [and much] whisperinge, but not any mann durste say a word for his life, for that hee was now growne so [far into her] Majesties favor as no man but the Earle of [Leicester ruled] the corte. And if any mann have any s[uit] to the [p]rince, who muste prefer the same but [his] Lordship, so as bribes came in tombeling [two] and three folde, which like the [. . .], with his] hande hee refused but rakes together [with] his whole fistes.

And now hee begines to [mount] alofte and to beard his betters and [tread upon his] equales, thinkeinge with Pompie to have [no equals] nor yet with Cesar to have no [rivals, he forces] the cheffe of the nobillitie into [retirement by his] intollerable surqudrie. Knowinge [that Leicester; fol. 378] never had merited eyther by his vallor tried in forraine regions againste the professed enemies of his cuntry or by puttinge downe att any tyme any hostile insurrection growne by the distempered humores of the commones, to be so highly favored of [her Majes]tie that in regarde of him the should al be sett by, and therefor disdeininge that so carped a knight should in such [base ma]nner insulte over them, and not any w[onder resenting]e the same, [*the noblemen*] of purpose absented [themselves from] the corte, seldome or never comminge [there, un]less by a spetiall commande from hir [Majesty] they bee att one tyme or other sente for, which is very seldome unless it bee for the entertaininge of some strange prince or ambassador and then ar they sent for or els not, which falls out patt as his Lordship wolde have it, for that they beinge gone hee may rule as hee liste, controwlinge of all, controwled of none, every man being glad [to c]repe in to his favor, countinge them selves happie to gaine a good countenance att his hand.

And now was his Lordship a lusty yonge widoer and nedes muste hee have a brave lusty [mistres]s, for that God had not imparted unto him the [virtue] of chastety that hee should live as [a monk,] but must nedes seeke out where to bed. [fol. 378v] And a fitter match then the Countess of Essex was not to be found out for him in all Englande, for shee was a gallante and faire yonge widowe and not by the fates allotted to live as a cloist[ress, m]uche less in a cloister or a cell. And therefore his Lordship became a sutor to hir Ladyship, w[hich] to blinde the ies of the world withall great guiftes and preasent[s they s]ente to each other and all to bringe [about that] which they lo[ng] beefore betwixt them [had concl]uded. But in the ende a match was [made up] and nothings wanted but a day of s[ancti]tie, which hir grace

with hir presence shortly . . . h[ad,] where I warrante you neyther wanted sumptuos appar[el] nor dainty fare, neyther of of them both fearing att [all] there former deserved plage and ponishment for so ho[rrible,] foule, and wicked dedes as they in there consciences [knew] they h[ad c]omitted.³³ And yet the same confem[ation] was generally suspected of all and wold [have shown] if they durste have bine tould of it to there fa[ces. But] now who but his Lordshipp in the corte, and as [in pride] and ambition hee paste, so in like manner w[edded he] in every degree with a Countess fittinge hir [husband's] humor, for more liker a princes then a subje[ct in the] corte she bore and demened hir self, [as one] who seinge hir lorde to be [the master over] all the nobillitie and con[ceiving well that; fol. 379] they durste doe nothinge and that as it were they had him att a becke,³⁴ thought in like sorte all this were nothinge if shee in like sorte had not all the [other goo]d counteses in the court att the like stay, and therefor in all that ever she might [*she*] practised and devised to effecte the same, in so [*much*] as if [ever once] hir Majestie were disposed for the entertainment [of some stra]nge prince or embassador to have any new [gown mad]e hir she wilbe sure with[*in*] one fortnight after, or att the leste afore the departure of the embassador, to have an other of the same sorte and fation sutable in every degree with hir Majesties and in every respecte as costly as hir Majesties, if not more costly and sumptuos then hers. Whose intollerable pride hir Majestie notinge, after some admonitions for it and the same slightly regarded, tould hir as one sone lightened the yearth, so in like sort she wold have but one Quene in Englande, and for hir presumption takinge hir a whirit on the eare in plaine termes strictly forbad hir the corte, not uppon paine of hir high indignation to approach within five [m]iles of the same where soever the same shoulde art any tyme bee residente, which [*with*] patience perforce shee was compelled to obey. And seinge that in the corte shee [might] not duell as afore, yett was hir pride in hart no[t a w]hit abated but the sinne in every respecte greatly [increased,] as by hir doinges moste plainly appered. [For if she should] att any tyme bee dissposed eyther for hir [fol. 379v] recreations sake att any tyme or for hir pleasure to take the aire, as through Cheapside or some such [pla]ce, no less then fower milke whit stedes will she [have to] drawe hir alonge the same in hir chariot, w[ith] hir fower footmenn in there blacke velvett jackettes w[ith] silver beares on there backes and [th]ere brestes, with . . . a master whome she [has to walk along]side, havinge [a] cople of knightes and thirty [or forty foot]men afore, [then] hir coaches of gentill wemen [each of them] with their pages and servantes cominge behinde them, as people [there] gasinge verely sup posinge it eyther to be hir Majestie or e[lse] some strange prince or embassador come frome some some strange and forraine cuntry. And thus thoughe [no] prince, yett as princelike as may be she beares and [carries] hir selfe in all poyntes.

But levinge hir to the [reward of] all pride, lett us a littell forth search and se[ek in]to his Lordshipes seacret driftes and polleses [whereby he] is growne to such state and authourity by his [continual] insinuatinge with hir Majestie, that uppon him [as the] chefeste pillar of the land she wholly relies [and places] all hir truste and confidence, so as nothinge [may] passe eyther in parlament or conesell when [his Lordship] likes or mislikes any thinge. And well [accommodating] him selfe to the tyme, torninge of [everything to his gain] and commoditie, so, as I warrant [you, he is not] without his sondry sorte of [devices and policies which; fo1. 380] divers and sondry waies hee employes, as one for papistes and other for protestantes and the third for puritanes, emboldeninge the puritanes againste the bi[s]hopes, tellinge them that there livinges makes them so [fat,] and then beinge greased in hand by the bishopes tels them that the puritanes ar a sedisius kinde of people and not to bee sofer[ed in a Ch]ristian common welth, animatinge the one agai[nst] the other, soferinge the bishopes to comitt them to prison and straight of his owne authoritie realesinge them againe, tellinge the puritanes hee wilbe a meane to bringe reformation and dissipline in to the church, hee beinge indede of no

religion but that which bringes him in gaine and commoditye; so as if discipline and reformation be not brought in to the church afore hee bringe the same in, it is never like to bee brought in att all; for he hath learned of his master Machivell to make a use of all religions and to torne them all to his owne commoditye. So as if they bee papistes, but esspetially recusantes, then will his ministers be sure to informe againste them, and so be brought within the compass of some statute whereby att the leaste all they have shalbe forfeit and they clapt upp in some prison or other, as the [Gate]house, the Flette, the Clinke, or the Marshalsey, and [though] they might have disspended five hundred [pounds yea]rly they count them selves happie if thereof [they retain but] one, the reste as they say beinge [turned to the] Queenes use, [fo1. 380v] when God knowes the leste parte thereof come to hir coff[ers] by that tyme each officer hath had his fee. And wh[ere before] was good hospitallitie kepte and many a poore mann could [be] fed att there gates, now ar the same w[ithout] sh[elter,] no relief at all or socker cominge from thence.

For [devices] I tell you hee had of great cunninge, in that yerely [he] disspendes so much as hee [exact]ed, all to maintaine his [base and] filthy luxurie, for I tell [you he has] no ordinarie [ointment in a] bottell all[so] that costes [more than ten] pound a pinte, to provocke him to fillthy luxury.³⁵ Well may th[e men of the] Forestes of Deane and of Wier [*or Wye?*] complaine of [his] extreme excess in the same, for out of them to [maintain and] uphold the sinne and to borne and consume in h[is lusts, not in hearths] nor in milles in those quarters, hee hath had [more] tall and sturdy stronge okes then wold have [served to build] a right good navie to have served the gre[at]est prince in Cristendome, they yeldinge him each day [more than x] pound sturlinge. And yet in respecte of his [other licenses] that continually bringe him in coyne and [ready money, the] same is to be accounted as no thinge. So [as through] the esteme and pride thereof, as also [by the great] countenance of hir Majestie, he is [almost so overcome with] selfe love of him selfe, as even [in his drinking and] belly chere hee stickes not [to mock at the] misery [of] him who by birth a[nd right is greatly his better, and to; fol. 381] whose predicesor hee had bine so much beholdinge even for the savinge of his wreached life.³⁶ For not longe since sittinge att a bench [he] consorted with such as fitted his fitted his humor, and fallinge in to greate deversitie of talke, as in such company there seldome or never wants, the cheffeste was of the [..]tie [and] crestes that divers of the nobillitie gave, some [com]mendinge this manns and some that mannes, when hee, seminge to be ignorante in that which hee knew too well, like god Backus out of his cuppes of wine demandes what was the Earle of Arundels creste, when preasently one of his knaves makes answeare, and it like your Lordship, the rampinge horse. Haugh, haugh, quoth hee with an envious laughther, not much unlike, for as the horse that is wild and untamed will sofor no mann to mounte or tame him, but kicke and flinge, soferinge no man to come nighe him, but ready to lepp upp on every others backe, so the same horse beinge taken and tamed [and u]sed a while to the snaffell, bitt, or [bridle] becomes in short tyme so gentill [and trac]table that any manne whosoever [he be may] sitt him and ride hime, [fol. 381v] whome afore for his fercnes none durste lay h[and] on for feare of danger, hurte, or spoylinge. [Thus mock]inge the noble mann in his miseries [to wh]ose predicesor hee was so much beholding.³⁷

But to such pride [and dishon]esty is [he] growne that to thinke [thereof] is in a ma[nner] intollerable, for accordinge to Machivels rule and order for his owne pleasure, profitt, and comoditie hee will not sticke to spoile and undoe five hundred pure people if occati[on] serve. As by his dealinges moste p[lainly] appered not longe since with the poor Denbyshire menn, of which cuntry [his little] sone and heire was lorde, for [to build for] him selfe parkes and places of [pleasure] he pulles downe whole townes, far[ms, and] villages, some of theme

having [passed] in the same from the father to [the son since] longe afore the conqueste. [But such was] the greedy appetite and [avarice of the man, his] ambisius and incrochinge [humour, that he thrust them] forth of there living[s together with their] wives and there ch[ildren, who must seek; fol. 382] habitations in the woodes and mountaines, for from him there was smale sucker or comforte to be looke[d] for, for that hee that could finde in his harte to thruste them forth of there livinges could in like mannor they knew finde in his stony harte they should there have perished and [*been*] utterly consumed; and feelinge the penury and gre[at] mysery that by his merciles dealinge was fallen upon them, there poore wives and littell infantes, [*they*] determined with them selves to seke redress with as much sped as possibly they might. And so the beste of them, consultinge together, determine to make there humble supplication to hir Majesty and the whole counsell for redress in such a manefeste wronge, which hee like a crafty wreach misdoubtinge, so provided againste there cominge that whene they came here there sute was could, and whereas they hoped for redresse of there [wrong] and great injury profered to them [and thei]re wives and children, neyther [themselves nor] there petition might once be [admitted to] come within hir Majesties sighte, [fol. 382v] or once so much as to the counsell table, but with many reprochfull speches and contumelius outbraides the moste of them [are] clapte upp for the presumcion in prison, the reste sent home with heavie hartes to be [witness of] there neighbors ill suckcess.³⁸ But the the [good] Lord lookinge in to [this] inhumaine crue[lty] of his and with wh[at heart]less sorte h[e had] dealt with thease pore people, even [in] his hieste pompe and in his chefeste glory tooke a waie from him all his ho[pe] of posteritie, his sone and heire the yonge Earle of Denbigh, who shoulde hee have lived for to have proved so vil[e an] atheste as his father all England had [not] bine en[ou]gh for them both.³⁹ But the [Lord] knoinge that from a good tree oft [comes] bad frute, but that from a bad tr[ee never] comes good frute, toke him a w[ai]e [for] Englandes good, as wee hope in his [goodness] hee will do the father a fore [his] devises take there effecte [and the] danger should growe to [success,] which the Lord graunte [of his mercy for Christ's] sake and discover [all of Leicester's devices to] the world and pro[vide for the frustration; fol. 383] of the wicked wreach all his wicked devises, driftes, and practices. For hee is now growne to that hed stronge presumption and bouldnes, that presuminge so much upon hir Majestie that hee scornes his inferiors, out countenances his equales, and abuses his betters, impatient of the leste injury prese[n]te[d] to him selfe and yet abusinge and wronginge of all others.

As not long since hee profered no smale abuse unto the noble Earle of Sussex, who not induringe so carped a knight as hee should in so highe a presence offer him disgrace challenged him for the same in to the feld, which for his credites sake he semed to accepte and promised of his honor to mete him there, all thoughe he never meante the same, and yet makes a show of great preperation, makinge the noble mann dance a whole daies [a]ttendance for him that never meante to come [to] him upon Blacke Heath with all his men, [hav]ing privile acquainted hir Majestie with [the] whole matter, who preasantly sent a [straig]ht comande that upon paine [of her high] displeasure and indignation [fol. 383v] the one of them once to meadell with the other but to refer it to hir selfe and the counsell, whose comand was to the noble earle as a lawe, who desired nothinge [so] much in this world as to have had but [one] bout with the meacocke,⁴⁰ to have geaven him but one knocke for all the great [insults] profered to him selfe and the rest of the nobillitie. But his Lordship knew [it] was goo[d] slepinge in a whole skine and that [if] he had once come there it had bine a h[ard] matter to have come safe home againe, and therefore made such meanes as hir [Majesty] and the counsell tooke upp the matter, [and so] they were mad a couple of holloe ffrendes.⁴¹

And yet it wa[s] not lon[g ere] hee profered the like abuse to one [of the] cheffeste peeres of the realm, [and being] in like sorte of him challenged [to the field] promised of his honor to mete h[im there,] but meante in dede to have [murdered him] afore hee came, and to th[at end he] hired one with a musked [to shoot] him as hee should hav[e come to the] place appoynted, bu[t this man disdain[ing that; fol. 384] the noble man should be so shamefully murdered by his good meanes made the same knowne unto him, who charging his Lordshipe with this treacherus dealinge hee with many execrations and store of othes utterly denied that by him or any meanes of his any such treacherus facte was intended, and that seinge there quarrell was of no great moment that for the same the one of them should seke the spoile of the other, wished for his parte an ende of the same and that they might be lovers and frendes as erste afore tyme they had bine, which the noble mann seinge, and knowinge that it was not possible to effect what hee wished duringe the great continuance of hir Majesties favor, shooke handes with his Lordship and so became ffrendes, for well he knew that there was [no] open standinge againste him, for that his [au]thoritie daylie increased and such rule [and] sw[ai]e in the corte he bare as no [man] but hee was in any favor.⁴²

And [not] long since for his sawsie presumption [fol. 384v] hee was as rightly served as mought bee. For hir Majestie beinge abroad in progress and ready to desende forth of hir chariot, he presumptuously offers to take hir forth of the [same,] which hee to whome the same of dutie belonged seinge, not able to indure his [in]tollerable arrogansie, tooke him a so[und] box on the eare, biddinge [him take] hir Ma[jesty's] stedes forth of there traces and hie him with them to the stable, for that more ff[ittly] apertainde unto him then so malepertly to [lay] handes on hir person.⁴³ Which disgrace hee was faine to pockett upp, threateninge revenge to him that mad smale acco[unt] thereof, who rather had thruste his [knife] to his ribes then his fiste to his [ear,] had not the rigor of the law w[ithheld] him, in regard of an ould grudg[e he had of] him. But the feare thereof with[held] him from that which his hart [longed] to doe. And after warde it [was his sorry] happ to fall in to to the [clutches of Leicester?] through his owne neglig[ence and inattention,] out of which to helpe him [he had not one] sure frende of him[self but . . .; fol. 385] if a hatfull enemy may be counted a frend.

And now by the waie lett me a littell shewe you how hee rewardes them that have spent all they have in his servis, mary, deales with them for the moste parte as men do with there horses, who wile they ar stronge, lusty, and sirvishable feede them and cherish them as men should doe, but when they wax lene, ould, and [un]profitable and that there is no more servise to be had of them torne them to grase on an ould dich banke or els take forty pence of the dogmaster for there scinne. And for an instance of the like dealinge of his Lordship, I will sett you downe the whole ma[nn]or thereof; although it will seme some what tedious unto you, yet is it well woorth the notinge and markinge, and thereby one may judge of his pestelente nature, which in mannor and forme folloinge insueth.

[There] was not longe since dwellinge [in Yor]keshere a gentillman of [good estate] and caulinge which might [spend; fol. 385v] of yearly reavenewes to the value of thr[ee] hundred poundes att the leaste, which genti[ll]mann had a longinge desire to gett the whit beare and raged safe on [his] backe, thinkinge if once hee might [but] get that on his sleve hee might [lord] it with the beste gentillmann or squ[ire in] the country, and therefore made [all] the ffrendes that possible hee might [to] effecte and bringe the same to pass. So after some frendes made and no smale bribes bestowed this gentill man had what so much hee desired, which when hee had obteyned, his state was sone [seen] both in his countenance and in his app[arel,] for havinge occasion to att[en]d in the [Court] and all waies to be in his lordes pr[esence he] was faine to sute him selfe accordin[gly, and] where as a fore a semly sute

[would have] servde to have worne among [his friends and] honest neyborns, now no thinge [but] velvet and sattine wolde [serve him, with] his chaine of goulde fold[ed twice] doble about his necke, [costly] bractetes aboute his wr[ists, and rings on] every finger of h[is hand, and; fol. 386] with all the reste of his apparell corespondent, so as if his three hundred pound had bine three thousand a yeare it wold not have sufficed to have borne out his prodigall expences, in so much as within for or five yeares expirance hee was ronne so far in the marchantes bookes that hee hardly knew which waie to get forth, for that hee ought more by five hundred pound then all that was lefte wold make satisfaction, so as Cheapside, Poules, nor the Exchange were no walkinge places, in so much that hee was driven to play lease in sight and walkt for the moste parte as oules doe by night and that in such feare and timeritie that every naile that cougth hould of his sleve hee tooke for a sargante to carie him to the Counter.⁴⁴ And livinge in this lothsome life, not knowinge how to remedie the same, [he] thought good to acquainte his lord, with [good] cause, in what miserable state hee [lived,] hopinge for that in his honnors [service] and [to] do him credit he had consumed [his pa]trimony he wold nowe att this instant [stand his] good lord and rid him out of [fol. 386v] these trobles, and preasently put his determination in practise, so as havinge gott excess unto his Lordship and to him made knowne his miserable state w[ith] desire of his Lordshipes favora[ble mind, he] preasently receaved this ansure of [his] Lordship, how that hee had well considered of his state and that he was not altogether unmin[d]full of him, but that hee shoulde finde that he wold stande his good lord. Mary, well you may thinke that it should not bee for nought, for moste suttelly seinge to what desperat state he was br[ought] and that for hope of rewarde hee [would] attempte any thinge, calls him [into] his secret chamber and ther [talks] with him about his matters, tell[ing him] that if his hart wold serve [him] to attempt a matter hee wold m[ention to] him and therein bee both f[aithful and secret] hee should finde that hee w[ould be a good] lord unto him, and that [when he had this] performed and done hee [might] any thinge comaunde [of him and; fol. 387] hee should make full accompte. And therewithall manifestinge the same unto him, which was no less then wilfull murther, with some what in hand as good lucke to beegine withall and promisse of mountains when the dede was finished, presently goes about to performe the same, which ere it was longe moste wickedly hee effected. And beinge for the same worthely apprehended, [he] was caste amongste other malefactors in the goale [sic], from whence with all possible sped that may be hee informes his Lordship of all that had happened and withall desires his honnor to be mindfull of him, who preasently againe sendes woord by the same messenger that he shold not nott nede to put him in mind for that of him selfe hee was mindfull enough and that it stod so much uppon his honnor as that hee could not forgett him if hee wold. But hee wilde him to be mery and feare nothings, and for that hee could not [stay] the corse of the law but that the [law] muste nedes have his [. . .] [he should] not therefore doubt of any [fol. 387v] thinge, and, as for death, not so much as a thought thereof should once troble him, for that it was as far for [from] him as from his Lordship, and that his pardon was alre[ady] sealed, and thereto hee bad him truste of his honnor. And all though this ch[ee]red him somewhat, yett was it no smale greef unto him, beinge a gentill mann of g[ood] birth, to bee arraind att an open sise. [But] there was no other reamody, and sessio[n] beinge att hand hee amogste other[s] was called to the barr and uppon his owne confession found guiltie, had se[n]tence of death pronounste againste him, which he semed littell or nothings to [fear,] hopinge uppon that which was neve[r] to be sente him, in so much as when [the] reste of the condemned prisoner[s] w[ere] prayinge unto God for forgivenes [of their] sinnes, hee on the other side was [surfeiting] of wine and drinkinge car[ouses to the] health of his lorde. But now the da[y] of execution beinge come hee am[on]g [the] reste was conveied to the s[caffold, with time] passinge awaie and h[e waiting; fol. 388] for that which was never meant to be sent him and the executioner hasteninge to performe his office, and seinge how fowly hee was deluded

with the smale tyme of repenttance for his sinnes, with many grevous exclamations on his Lordship as on the aughther of all his mishap, with great penitensie ended his life. And to this great prefermente hee [*Leicester*] preferred him after he had consumed all his patrimony in his servis and lastly his life, who although he sofered worthely yet the blood both of him and the other [*will*] be on day asked att his wicked handes. But twenty of these devises hath hee to rid those out of the waie that may any waie discry any of his wicked practices [a]nd devises.

And how hee disparges the n[ob]le blud of the lande, witnes the match he made be twixte a meane knights daughter and the noble Earle of Darbies sone and heire,⁴⁵ and ann other as ill [or even] far worse be twixt the Lord [*lost*] and a meane gentillwoman, [fol. 388v] which had like to have coste him hir Majesties favor, but so could hee insinuate with hir grace that on him as on the chef[est] pillar of the land she wholly relies and puts all hir truste and confidence, w[here]as contrary wise, unless the Lorde of his mercie do bringe his treacherus practices to light, hee is like to prove the only handsaw that shall hew the maine p[illars] and postes a sunder and ruinate all [of] this noble land which so long tyme ha[th] flourished over all others, which the Lord for his sones sake for bid, and discover him afore his devises take there effe[ct and] cutt him of, that the may never take [effect.]

And thus accordinge to my promisses [I have] sente the so much as I can well r[emember.] Till tyme discover the reste of [his dealings,] be wise and carefull.

R.F. [*or R.P.*] .

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1. First published as *The Copie of a Leter, Wryten by a Master of Arrte of Cambridge* (Rouen?, 1584), STC 19399, on which see Peck, 'Government Suppression of Elizabethan Catholic Books: the Case of *Leicester's Commonwealth*,' *Library Quarterly*, xlvii (1977), 163-77. A critical edition is in preparation by myself and Dr. P. R. Roberts of Canterbury.

2. See, for example, 'News from Heaven and Hell: a Defamatory Narrative of the Earl of Leicester', *English Literary Renaissance*, viii (1978), 141-58; Julius Briegerus's *Flores Calvinistici* (1586); Rogers's *Leicester's Ghost*, ed. Franklin B. Williams, R.E.T.S. IV (Chicago, 1972); Peck, 'Another version of the Leicester Epitaphium', *Notes and Queries*, ccxxi (1976), 227-8.

3. This note is bound with the 'Letter' in the P.R.O.: '12 August 1869. My dear Mr. Green [calendarist of the state papers], I do not know this to be in print in its present form, although perhaps it may be so, but I would suggest that it is probably the earliest, or one of the early forms of the libel which ultimately settled down under the general title of Leicester's Commonwealth. It went through many stages and forms both in manuscript and in print. Believe me Yours very sincerely, Jno Bruce.' My recent study of over sixty manuscript versions of the *Commonwealth* has shown all of them to be either copies of or extracts from the 1584 printed edition.

4. *Catholic Record Society*, xxi [1919], 57-66, chapter entitled 'Howard Traditions in Leicester's Commonwealth, 1584'. The extracts are those dealing with the fall of the Duke of Norfolk and with the jest upon the Earl of Arundel's crest.

5. *On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Plays* (Urbana, 1959), 185-98. The play is usually dated ca. 1586.
6. Bowers, 'Kyd's Pedringano: Sources and Parallels', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, xiii (1931), 241-9; *Leicester's Commonwealth*, pp. 56-58.
7. Peck, 'An Alleged Early Draft of "Leicester's Commonwealth",' *Notes and Queries*, ccxx (1975), 295-6.
8. The tract itself is found in the State Papers, 15/28/113, fols. 369-88v, stamped Conway Papers on each page, abstracted in the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Addenda, 1580-1625*, pp. 136-8. The separated title page is at S.P. 12/175/101.
9. Sutton is the family name of the ancient lords of Dudley, from which line Leicester's family claimed descent.
10. An allusion to Leicester's crest, the bear chained to a ragged staff.
11. The passage is obscure and is based partly upon a conjectured positioning of a loose fragment of the manuscript in this place; but the sense seems to be that Leicester (the bear), having rendered Lord Burghley (traditionally, the fox) ineffectual, is now beyond the control of the Queen (the lion).
12. For Midas and his ass ears, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XI (ll.194-216 in Golding's 1567 translation). St. Michael's Mount is in Cornwall.
13. The birds are presumably informants, and the seed, presumably, gold; the far west country may be the Hesperides or the South American mines.
14. 'Deceitful stratagems and indecent practices', after Niccolo Machiavelli and the satirical poet Pietro Aretino (1492-1556).
15. Leicester's father, John Dudley. Duke of Northumberland, executed on 22 August 1553.
16. There is no evidence of Norfolk's having intervened for Dudley, though, since as a duke (after August 1554) he was premier among the Gentlemen of King Philip's Chamber, he may have been able to do so. Dudley, under sentence of death since January 1554 for participation in his father's rebellion, was pardoned and released in October 1554, and his attainder was removed in March 1558.
17. Achitophel counselled King David's son Absalom to sedition (II Samuel 15-17).
18. The 'boar' is presumably (from his crest) the young Earl of Oxford; though in March he was working hard to obtain a reprieve for Norfolk, there seems to be no evidence of his having been dispatched abroad in June 1572.
19. Sentenced on 16 January 1572 for his intrigues with the agents of the captive Mary, Queen of Scots, after several stays the Duke was executed on Tower Hill at 8 a.m., Monday, 2 June. This account, even to his shaking hands all around, accords very well with

contemporary reports (see N. Williams, *Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk*, 1964. pp.253-4).

20. Thomas Percy (1528-72), 7th Earl of Northumberland; the space for the name has been left blank in the MS. 'Hotspur' had been the epithet of the first Earl's son Henry Percy (1364-1403).

21. 'Surquedry': arrogance, presumption.

22. Charles Neville (1543?-1601), 6th Earl of Westmoreland; the event alluded to is the Northern Rebellion of 1569 (2 years *earlier* than Norfolk's execution).

23. The date of Northumberland's execution has been left blank. Westmoreland lived in exile until his death, supporting himself by Spanish pensions, his impoverished condition frequently cited as a warning to young English Catholics who contemplated going abroad for conscience.

24. Dr. P. R. Roberts informs me that he has found no evidence of any offices of these men so transferred to Leicester.

25. Leicester's lady is his first wife, Amy Robsart. 'Barseabe' (Bathsbeba) is Lettice Knollys, her husband 'Urias' is Walter Devereux (1541?-76), first Earl of Essex (II Samuel 11-12).

26. 'Fere': spouse.

27. 'Tables'; backgammon.

28. Amy Robsart, found at the foot of the stairs at Cumnor in Berkshire on 8 September 1560; the coroner's jury found a verdict of death by mischance, but modern opinion inclines either to a consequence of cancer or, more plausibly, suicide. The assumption of Leicester's complicity in murder was extremely widespread but apparently inaccurate. This account treats the deaths of Amy and Essex as parts of a single plot; Leicester's involvement with Lady Essex did not begin until 1565.

29. Essex held the title of Earl Marshal but was never Lord Deputy of Ireland.

30. A courtier (like the 'carpet knight' below), not a soldier.

31. Essex died in Dublin on 22 September 1576. Suspicion of Leicester's instigation of poisoning was nearly universal, but it would seem more likely that he died of dysentery.

32. 'Glaives': lances or broadswords.

33. Leicester married Lettice Knollys (1540-1634), Countess of Essex, at Wanstead on 20 September 1578. The Queen's hatred of the 'she-wolf' was common knowledge.

34. That is, he had them at his beck.

35. Cf. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, p. 39.

36. Philip Howard (1557-95), Earl of Arundel, son of the Duke of Norfolk supposed to have interceded for Dudley in former years, imprisoned in November 1583 as a consequence of the Throgmorton Plot and again, never to reemerge, after trying to flee the realm in April 1585.

37. In *Leicester's Commonwealth* (pp. 167-8) the same jest is told of Leicester's father and Henry Fitzalan (d. 1580), Earl of Arundel, Philip's maternal grandfather.

38. The barony of Denbigh was bestowed upon Dudley in 1564; his exploitation of the region is described by Penry Williams, *The Council in the Marches of Wales under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff, 1958), 237-8.

39. Robert, Lord Denbigh (not 'Earl of'), was born in 1578 or 1579 and died on 19 July 1584.

40. 'Meacock': coward, effeminate weakling.

41. Thomas Radcliffe (1526?-83), third Earl of Sussex, Leicester's chief opponent on the Council. The incident described is probably 'the disaster fallen out yesterday betwixt two great planets' on 12 July 1581, in which the Queen commanded the two earls to keep to their chambers to prevent violence (*Hatton Memoirs*, p. 177; S.P. 12/149/67-69). Black Heath, a field near Greenwich Palace.

42. This may refer to the alleged attempt by the Leicestrian courtier William Killigrew (d. 1622) to shoot Thomas Butler (1532-1614), the Earl of Ormonde, with a caliver in about 1565. Cf. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, pp. 44-45.

43. This anecdote is similar to Naunton's tale of how Leicester was outfaced by one Bowyer, a Gentleman of the Black Rod; *Fragmenta Regalia* (ed. 1641), p. 6. Caring for the steeds more fitly appertained because Leicester held the office of Master of the Horse.

44. St. Paul's, the Royal Exchange, etc., were places of idle congregation; he feared arrest for debt and commitment to the Counter or Compter, debtor's prison, should he be seen abroad.

45. Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange (Earl of Derby in 1593; d. 1594), married in about 1579 Alice (d. 1637), daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorp and later the wife of Lord Chancellor Egerton. Leicester's involvement is unconfirmed.