

AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND

Antoine de Bordeaux-Neufville, French Ambassador to England (1652–1660)

to Jules Mazarin (1602–1661), chief minister of France (1642–1661)

London, Saturday, 26 October 1659 [OS]

Since the letter which I did myself the honour to write to Your Eminence on the 24th of this month, no great progress has been made in the establishment of the government of England, and we can still speak of it with only very little certainty, since the letters which arrived from Scotland on the evening of the day before yesterday assure us that General Monck persists in his resolution in favour of the Parliament, and that the news of its dissolution had no sooner reached him than he assembled the officers of his troops, declared to them his intentions and, having found that their opinions were conformable to his own, ordered them to hold themselves in readiness to march. It is even said that he arrested some Anabaptist officers less inclined to follow him than to accommodate themselves to the desires of the army.

This information caused the dispatch from hence yesterday morning of his brother-in-law and a colonel with some propositions, and in the evening another messenger was sent to declare to him that it had been determined to give him battle if he cannot be brought to hear reason. It has already been even proposed to go and meet him and decide the quarrel promptly, but he is too far advanced to draw back and threats do not seem to be able to alarm him, as he is a very determined man. His troops may be more tractable and prefer reconciliation to the uncertain success of a battle; this is also the principal reliance of the army in England....

The cabal of the Millenarians prevails in the army, among whom Mr. Lambert is greatly decried for having no religion, or show of it, in which last alone he differs from the most of them. His reputation still maintains him in credit in the minds of the soldiers and most honest persons in the army; and the number of these being small, his position is tolerably precarious, as well as is that of the republic, the forces of which are divided into two parties, some being friends of the Parliament and the others of those who dissolved it.

These last are again very different in their sentiments. The Millenarians and Anabaptists wish to keep the government to themselves, and Fleetwood inclines to their side. Lambert and his faction, perceiving that they are lost if the executive authority falls into the hands of these sectaries, and being no less ambitious, are striving to render themselves the masters. Until this moment this has only been done by means of intrigue; but if the army of Scotland came to an accommodation, probably there would occur some other division, and many imagine that Lambert will at length, if he loses all hope of prevailing, treat with the King of England. Others think that Monck is not less disposed to take this side and even that, unless he had already entered into some engagement, he would not so freely have declared himself or have left Scotland, his departure with the troops giving that nation every facility for revolt. It is further remarked that his last letter speaks, indeed, of shedding his blood, even to the last drop, for the Parliament of England, but without indicating whether he means that one which has just been dissolved.

These are reflections upon which no very positive measures should be taken, and we can only state that circumstances remain very favourable for the return of the prince to that army, whose leaders are least opposed to a monarchical government and who, as they took no part in the death of the defunct king, will more easily put confidence in the promises which may be made them on the part of the present sovereign. Their greatest difficulty would be, if they were willing to embrace his cause, to influence in his favour the troops under their command, and this is not to be hoped for until they are thoroughly engaged, the one against the other; to which they have hitherto shown so much repugnance that a reconciliation might even take place at the expense of their leaders.