

Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 11/91*Grey to Burghley, 6 April 1581*

Grey's letter to Burghley bears the marks of (and bears witness to) an uneasy relationship, and shows the instrumentality of such personal epistles in repairing offence. In fact, one of its primary purposes seems to be to repeat an apology made after an indiscretion by Edward Denny – which reveals, in turn, how essential it was for a politician in Grey's position to select the bearers of his letters wisely, from men whom he could trust not to overstep their commissions or to speak out of turn. As the letter makes clear, though (with probably deliberate irony), and despite its emphatic assurance that Grey trusts Burghley's care for the victualling of Ireland, the Lord Deputy was still waiting for a shipment of supplies from England: such shortages, which Grey here claims were caused by the abuse of Burghley's associates and officers, formed a common subject of correspondence throughout Grey's deputyship.

The text of the letter is in Grey's characteristic italic, subscribed and signed with his usual autograph. The address is in Spenser's secretary hand.

Address and Endorsement

To the right Honorable my very good Lord the Lord Treasurer of England. /

6. April 1581.
The Lord Deputie of Ireland
to my Lord by Mr Dillon /

Text

I render yowr good Lordship many humble thanckes for yowr letter by Mr Fenton; it gladding mee very mootche too fynde styll the contynewance of yowr Lordships good* wyll & faouere toowardes mee which truly my Lord I wyll euer cheerisse what in mee lyethe, & hathe allwayes been esteemed of mee far beeyonde the sheowe.

As tootchyng Ned Dennys reporte, I meruayle what came in his head too deale any waye in a** matter which in no sorte any hys instructioons tootched, & so mootche the more It woonders mee that in a thyng concernyng yowr Lordship his ouershootte shuld happen, Whowme greatly too honor & reuerence I allwayes; that yowr Lordship is satisfyed with my assertion therin it contents mee mootche, & surely but ryght yow yeeld mee in it, which yet very thanckfully I take.

Yowr Lordships care for owre relieff with vittayles can neyther bee denyed nor goethe vnacknowledged*, & I woold too God that vnder officers had been as carefull yn the executyng as yowr Lordship hathe euer been fownde in the directyng.

Of the later proportions appoynted too coome hyther wee haue not as yet receaued any, but contrarietie of wynde wee fynde too bee the cause; & I praye God, whan it doothe coome, too send vs honest ministers for the issuing of it, which is no small trowble & grieff vntoo vs heere, whow see daylie the nawghtiness & abuse of the officers & yet can not redress it. /

The little seruyce in Mounster I can not alltoogeahe excuse, & yet my Lordship there hathe been more doonne then I perceau is conceaued: for my parte withowte it bee of sum importance I take no^{*} delyght too aduertiss of euerie common persons head that is taken of, ootherwyze I could haue^{*} certyfyed of a hundrethe or twoo of theyr lyues ended since my coomyng from those partes, but in deede sum hinderance it browght too the greater seruice that the garrisoones could not remayne in sum of the places appoynted fyrst of by reazon that theyr vittayles could not bee so readily conueyed too them as was hoaped of.

As tootchyng the imperfections of the bandes surely my Lordship it hathe not fallen so mootche^{*} by the Captaynes defawlt as by the eeuyll choyce of men sent hyther whowse lazie dispositions & vnable bodies guyue ouer beefore they feele trauayle or at the least vppon the first prooff, but beesydes an esspecyall cause hathe happened this wynter eeuen from the beeginnyng heere amongst all owre garrisoons, a generall feruent or rather pestilent ague which in deede^{*} not puld downe but allmost hathe spoyled the bandes, Gods sufferance it is, & hys good pleazure I trust wyll bee agayne too cease it; but onece thowrogly with a good choyce supplied, as I perceau yowr Lordships there haue allreadie guyuen direction for it, I hoape in God, too see them heere after in better state mayntayned.

Where yowr Lordship thynckethe the perill of this State too lye moast in forrayne aydes, I no whytt varie from yowr Lordships mynde; but yet dowght I not so mootche any forenar that westward shulld attempt, as Northe warde, in case the Scottes maye bee accounted forenares, for heere sure{ly} hathe, doothe & wyll daylie more & more growe the disquyett & mischieff of this lande, if speedely it bee not looked vntoo & preuen{ted} as often I haue certyfyed thyther; Too^{*} force the rebell from the sea syde^{*} wee neede not for the inwarde cuntrie is^{*} hys owane see{k}yng, fynding there all his relieff & sustenance, & all owre trauayle is too dryue hym too the coastes where neyther fastnes for hymself{f} nor succoor for his create but sielldoome is fownde: the garrison of the Dingle was not layed so mootche for the annoyance of the rebell as the^{*} empeatchyng of forayne landing, &^{*} for the auayle of the cuntrie seruice is thowght now meete too bee drawn too Castle Magne there beeyng the verie Isthmus that deuydes Kerrie from^{*} Clanmorr{ice} Connalaghe & Desmonde, wheraboutes the rebell Earl hathe moast parte this wynter wallcked; & so mootche in the better rest, for that Ihon Zowtche hysself was with sicknes browght too deathes doore, & the whoale garrisoone beesydes so vizited as there were not left among them xl. able bodies, but eare summer goe, I hoape in God; yow shall heere that ennemie ootherwyze too bee layed vntoo, if yowr Lordship with the rest hoald on yowr fauourable care in supplying owre lackes & esspecyally of vittayle.

Tootchyng remoouyng of Collman heetherto I haue hard nothyng, but it so fall owte, in that or any oother thyng, yow shall fynde at yowr Lordships direction.

The reasonable good estate of Connaghe throwghe Sir Nycholas Mallbies late good seruice I dowght not but yowr Lordship is acquaynted with by my late aduertisments too yowr Lordship there of the same; & so mootche in awnsswer of yowr Lordships letter.

The occasion of this beara, Iustice Dillon, hys sending ouer is this: I was wylled by yowr Lordships of the Councill in a letter receaued now by Mr Fenton too proceede too the tryall of the meaner pryzoners heere that stande endyghted: Wheruppon considering with sum of my associates & too them adding the learned councell; of whowme in trowthe I fynde this the very sufficientiest & no less honest withall, wee fownde twoo greate inconueniencies in the cause of ordinarie tryall; the one that no sownde iurie could bee hoaped of; the oother, that thowghe they were cast, yet all benefitt that therby was too fall too her Maiestie of goods, landes, or possessions, by deedes of guyftes & former conueyancies is cleene wyped awaye; these extremities hath stayed my executyng of yowr direction, tyll I had aduertised therof; & the onely healp that wee see in it is a parlament, for the solicityng wherof & further instructing & resolluyng* of her Maiestie & my Lordships in any scruple that therabowtes maye ryze I haue sent this Ientleman, whowme, I earnestly praye yowr Lordship too further, countenance & fauour, not dowghtyng but yow shall* fynde hym woorthie of it. Waye well, I beeseetche yowr Lordship* the loss not deuoyed of dishonor too her maiestie, &* greate preiudice too the whoale cause, if these me{n} {...}ff* or lyuyng shuld goe acquyted by vniust bearinges & {...} dealinges, & thereafter forwarde the healp with a speedie {...} So commending the rest too the bearaes creditt, & mysellf in an(...) I maye assured too yowr Lordships deuotion, I take leaue for this tyme, prayeng the Allmyghtie God euer too keepe direct & prosper yowr Lordship. / Dublin this vjth of Aprill Anno 1581 /

Yowr Lordships vnfaynedly too
commaunde,

Arthur Grey

Good my Lord beare with mee if not so often as mysellf woold & yowr Lordship maye expect, I doo visitt yow with letters of myne owane, that infinitenes of my toyle passethe my ableness too perfourme my dezyre therin; dutie acknowleged. /

Textual Notes

* *after good*] 'f' deleted.

* **a]** The word 'any' has been reduced to 'a'.

* **vnacknowledged]** The letter 'n' inserted above the line, above a deleted 'w'.

* *after no*] 'ly' deleted.

* *after haue*] One or two (illegible) characters deleted.

* *after mootche*] Single-character (illegible) deletion.

* **deede]** Inserted above the line.

* *after Too]* 'seeke' deleted.

* *after syde]* 'to' deleted.

* **is]** 'for' deleted and 'is' inserted above the line.

* *after as the]* 'awnssw' deleted.

* *after landing, &]* Two-character (illegible) deletion.

* *after from]* 'y^e' deleted.

* **& resolluyng]** Inserted above the line.

* *after shall]* 'to' deleted.

* *after Lordship]* 'yⁿ' deleted.

* *after maiestie, &]* 'y^e' deleted.

* **me{n} {...}ff]** Damage to the manuscript, covering this and subsequent lines, has obscured the readings.

Annotations

the Lord . . . England] William Cecil, Lord Burghley; see biographies.

Mr Dillon] Justice Robert Dillon; see biographies.

yowr letter . . . Fenton] Geoffrey Fenton, secretary of state for Ireland; see biographies. Fenton had borne letters to the Queen and Privy Council in late December 1580 (see SP 63/79/26); in early March, he seems to have been in or near to Chester, awaiting transport back to Ireland (SP 63/81/9 and 63/81/19), possibly bearing Burghley's letter to Grey. This letter has not survived.

far beeyonde the sheowe] Far beyond the gratitude and esteem that I have shown; though Grey may also be making a wry point, in this patently formal passage, about the difference between real trust and politic courtesy.

Ned Dennys reporte] On Sir Edward Denny, see biographies. Grey had already written to Burghley on 29 January (SP 63/80/41), to say that 'I am geven to vnderstand that your Lordship receyved a sharpe Message by Ned Denny from her Maiesty for the defalte of vittuals here, for the which I am righte hartelye sorrye and so muche the rather lest your Lordship shoulde deme the same to haue proceeded of some intelligence vnto her Maiestie from mee'. Denny's role in this transaction is uncertain: Grey goes on to mention 'my lettre [to Elizabeth], sent at that tyme by Ned Denny', in which he had humbly requested more funding for the victualling of his troops; we may assume that Denny was acting as Grey's bearer, but it seems also that Elizabeth used him to bear a critical message of her own to Burghley, one suggesting to Burghley that Grey had gone 'over his head' to the Queen about a matter pertaining directly to his office. If it is the same incident that Grey is writing about here, the reference to Denny's **ouershootte** (i.e. the exceeding of his orders) suggests that Grey was attempting to distance himself from his bearer's (and, by marriage, his kinsman's) mismanagement of what should have been a delicate transaction with the Queen. At some level Grey must have known that this defence would not wash, for he was as answerable for his bearer's (and his client's) actions as Burghley was for his victuallers' corrupt dealings – it is no accident that Grey immediately tries to teach Burghley a lesson by disassociating the Lord Treasurer's provident stewardship from his victuallers' disorders, then going on to cite this very disorder as the cause of those deficiencies in the service for which Burghley had, apparently, chastised him. Indeed, one question raised by the opening part of this letter might be said to be the complex problem of the accountability of masters for their servants.

too deale . . . tootched] Denny was a captain in the army, and held no administrative position (for example on the Council). He appears to have traded on his family and court connections (with Grey, the Sidneys, and the Queen herself) where he ought to have observed the politic decorum of his position in the Irish service.

Whowme greatly . . . allwayes] The syntax is strange here, but the sense clear: whom I always greatly honour and revere.

ryght yow yeeld mee] You give me my due. One of the important tensions in this anatomy of duty and responsibility is that between merit/culpability and thanks/blame; Grey is anxious here to assert his right to be cleared of blame, while at the same time professing thanks for it, which (as his emphasis demonstrates) he knows to be a logical nonsense. Similarly, Grey goes on to imply, Burghley is to thank the Lord Deputy for not criticizing him for the 'nawghtiness & abuse' of his officers. For more on these transactions of credit and blame, see the postscript to 63/93/64, *infra*.

vnder officers] Administrative officers responsible for distributing the money and victuals sent from England.

later proportions] Grey clearly means 'more (or most) recent allotted amounts (of victuals)', perhaps close to *OED*, 'Proportion', *n.* 6(b), 'An allotted portion (of land, etc.)', though the earliest cited usage is 1616.

little seruyce in Mounster] Grey was also concerned with the state of Munster, writing to Walsingham on 12 May 1581 that it goes 'de malo in peius I knowe not what too saye too it' (SP 63/83/6). He made an expedition to the province in September and October of 1581.

I take . . . taken of] Grey made a similar claim, that he had merely been quiet about numerous services performed, in his letter to Elizabeth of 26 April 1581 (SP 63/82/54), in which he enclosed a 'Colleccion' of such services.

imperfections . . . ague] Grey had told Leicester on 13 March that 'a certayne raging feeuer is heere merueylus rieff' (SP 63/81/25), and complained elsewhere to Walsingham that the plague had depleted his bands: on 18 July 1581 he would report that 'Gods hand is styll heuely vppon vs with sicknes, the most parte of owre men newly supplied fallyng dayly sick in theyr garrisoons' (SP 63/84/26); and on 9 December 1580 (SP 63/79/5) he was still drawing Walsingham's attention to 'the weaknes of the bandes heere [...] by continuall vizitation of sicknes, as often I haue aduertized' (63/87/18).

forrayne aydes] I.e. from Spanish or papal forces, or, as Grey points out, from Scotland.

yet dowght . . . Northe wardel] 'I don't fear an attack on the western shore, as much as from the North.'

fastnes] A defensible hiding-place, such as a cave.

the Dingle] The location of the landing of papal forces at Smerwick.

empeatchyng] Hindering, impeding.

Castle Magne] Castlemaine, in Munster; see map.

the rebell Earle] I.e. Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond; see biographies.

Collman] Presumably Richard Colman, chief Remembrancer and responsible for the issuing of money in Ireland, who had been the subject of correspondence between Burghley and Wallop in 1580, in which he was accused of making false declarations about the money he had issued (see SP 63/72/5). This may explain Grey's remarks about corrupt 'vnder officers'. Grey's rhetorical delay in mentioning the business of Colman – another instance of corruption by one of Burghley's men – allows him to drag up and emphasize again the problem of a master's or patron's accountability.

Connaghe] I.e. Connaught.

the meaner . . . endyghted] Meaner (less noble, or less significant) than the Earl of Kildare and the Baron of Delvin, who had been arrested in December 1580 and were being held in Dublin Castle. 'Their be many prisoners in this castell', wrote Henry Wallop to Walsingham on 20 March 1581 (SP 63/81/37).

thowghe . . . cast] 'Even if they were to be condemned'.

parlament] A frequent preoccupation of the time. Grey wrote to Leicester on 13 March 1580/1, to say 'forgett not I pray yowr Lordship a parlament heere for the proceeding agaiynst these noble men', including Kildare (SP 63/81/25), a passage almost entirely in code, transliterated above the line. Edmund Waterhouse wrote to Walsingham seven days later, to advise him that 'It were verie good in my opinion that as maynie apt men as might be founden might be pleasid to make the vpper house in parlement'; 'without a parlament', he writes, 'it will be hard to make triall' of those people 'whose faultes be very manifest' (SP 63/81/37).