

TNA: PRO SP 63/82/54*Grey to the Queen, 26 April 1581*

This letter sees Grey adopting a surprisingly forthright tone to Elizabeth ('marry now...'), as he attempts to defend himself against charges of expensive and unsuccessful service, and indeed conscious that he may be exceeding the limits of decorum: 'pardon likewise humbly I craue, if herein I excede any thing the limits of becoming'. He also attempts, within these limits of becoming, to argue against the general pardon that Elizabeth is about to issue for all but the most prominent rebels: on the grounds that it may simply not be taken up by most rebels, that those who do take it up may throw it back in the face of the English, and that in any case it will force Grey into a disadvantageous position in his dealings with rebels such as Turlough Luineach O'Neill, in the struggle with whom he had recently been denied extra soldiers. The text of the letter is in Spenser's formal italic hand, typical of formal reports from Grey to the Queen. Grey has added the injunction and his signature in his own hand. A long passage in cipher on the final page uses codes distinct from those normally used by Grey in his letters to Walsingham; this probably represents a system designed for use only in letters to the Queen.

Address and Endorsement

To her most excellent
Maiestie

26 Aprill 1581
To hir Maiestie from the Lord
Grey.

Entred

Text

It may please your Highnes The course of thinges here willeth me agayne to trouble your Maiesty with former causes and besides to sende this Bearer for solliciting of the same fynding resolutions there not to answeere that which the necessitie here requireth. I haue often tymes advertised to my Lords and lately to your Highnes selfe the tickle hoalde or rather rebellious disposition that Tirlagh contynually resteth in, & dayly more and more makes shewe of, as the Marschalls lettres to mee herewith sent to your Highnes will nowhitt darkly display, besides a generall holownes of hartes here to your Maiesty The contentes whereof falling out true & the mammering condition of all the other provinces weighed, howe necessary yt is for your Maiestie to haue care of it, & in the meane how nerely yt toucheth me importunately to putt you in mynde of the same your Highnes selfe bee the decerner: To prouide for the worst hath neuer bene faulty, nor gone without commendation, though shewe haue not brought forth the effecte; to bee secure, and that in manifest warninges, besides great losse & late repentaunce, neuer with the wise escaped condemnation; If then no doubtfull signes of the perill appeare vnto you, & the looking to yt is to you ether the safetie or losse of

this state, I most humbly beseeche your Maiestie in your own* honours behalf & especially in gods respect, who hauing betaken vnto you the interest & gouernement of this land with nolesse duety of care and charge, then of the same wherein you abyde, will doubtles challenge nolesse accoumpt at your handes for the one then for the other, most humbly, I say, I beseeche your Highnes to haue earnest regard in tyme of it & pardon likewise humbly I craue, if herein I exceede any thing the limits of becoming, the Lord is my witness true & earnest zeale to your honour and service is the onely cause of the miscarriage, yf any there bee. Vnlesse your Maiesty will affoord the encrease of force I late wrote for, I see not but one of these* inconueniences will light, ether a most dishonorable composition with Tirlagh contayned in one Article or rather worde, namely his owne will, & the same to stand on no better certenty then his owne liking; or els hazard yf not losse of the whole; the numbers already here not being hable both to front him and leaue sufficient force to answere the Rebelles of the other provinces, as but now they are, which weakenes in vs once fownde, & that your Highnes will not goe through with what you haue begonne, for one that is out now accoumpt then of tenne, & settled they will growe in their already commune boast, that for the chardge they will enforce your Highnes to giue them ouer. Your Highnes charge indeed is very great, I cannot denye & to God I would, that I might as well, as willing I am to helpe yt; but your Maiestie in this case is not to looke onely vpon the chardge, but vpon the cause as well, and then I doubt not but the cause shall appeare as rare as the charge vnwonted: That any needlesse or without good grownd hath bene raised or lenger contynued then the cause required, with your Maiesties indifferent favour I dare take vpon me to answere; & where I beare some fault to be fownd at the number of Colonells that should be here, truly Madam there are in all but twoo, Sir George Bouchier for the Garrisons in the County of Limerick & Connelagh, which is very necessary the Lord Generall not being alwaies in the Prouince, and Iohn Zowche in Kerry a farre remoued place from all other companies, where necessitie nolesse required the like Officer I am also giuen to vnderstand that your Highnes is the more griued at your charges for that you find the same very sclderly answered in seruice; indeed so great seruices as such cost might seeme to craue, I will not affirme to bee doen nether doo I hope will your Maiestie measure accidentall euentes by such a continuall certein grownd, but if endeuour haue bene ouerslipped or trauaile & aduerture spared, then lett your threasure be accoumpted vaynely wasted & the burden on me layd. I haue not euer certefied of euery seruice doen, because I expected still as I desyred such a one, as worthely might haue come to your Highnes eares but yf taking of Cowes, killing of their Kerne & churles had bene thought worth the aduertising I could haue had euery day to haue troubled your Highnes the which seruices in totall yett not beeing to goe vnaccounted of, would in particular report haue brought but meane delight; marry now seing that by saying nothing, nothing is thought to be doen I thought good too commend to your Highnes by this Bearer a Colleccion of all the seruices doen here since my gouernement, so farre as may be remembred, which though not so great as ether your Highnes may expect or my self would wish, yett doubt I not but it shall appeare, God to haue fauored your Highnes forces as much in this tyme, as in any other heretofore I tarry not so long in this theme, that I would carry your Highnes to the contynuaunce or encrease of charges or proceding in the Action further then apparent reason holde with me for your owne honour & safety of state here; yf any other shall bring better reason to the contrary & shall thinck with lesse charge & yett safety this gouernement may be carried, which I confesse to goe far beyond my reach ether in concept or execution I most humbly craue for furtheraunce of your Highnes

service to be called home and such a one to haue the place: yett is it not vnknownen to me, that thinges might be patched vp, and a face of peace & quietnes made to appeare, but then the gouernement or rather Confusion must be this; that no vice, disobedience or insolencie should ether be punished, or brided, your Highnes lawes answered by none, but by a handfull of the English pale murder, stealth, rapes & all other insolencies to haue free allowaunce, otherwise the maske of this quiete would soone be throwen of, as daylie experience shewes; for he that to day semes a duetifull Subiect, lett him for any of these or other lesse crimes be to morrow called vpon to come & answere, streight a proteccion is demaunded & in the meane he wilbee vpon his keeping, as here they terme yt, which in plaine English is none other, then a Traitor that forcibly will defend his cause & not answere to iustice: I know the great feare, due reverence & sownd knowledg your Highnes hath of god, besides the naturall regard to your honour & place cannot suffer you to like or rather not to detest such kynde of gouernement: your wisdom then cannot but see the great vnsurety of the same, & as touching the sparing thereby lett the forepast charges of so many yeares caused onely by this irresolute proceeding in the action, shewe the gayne & whether in reason one eight or tenne of these yeares charges bestowed at once vpon a thorough reformation had not bene a farre more sparing way, besides other good, then to suffer yt to runne into this continuall consumption of threasure which neuer wilbee helped vnlesse the plott bee altered. A peaceable gouernement were the easiest & quietest trade for me or whosoever should supply this place, & travaile enough well entended too, shall any Gouvernour here finde of ciuile & politique causes, what reason should then induce me, to that labour to adde care, toile, & hazard of warre* causes, yf with duety & conscience to God & Prince saued I might eschewe yt. Your Maiestie I heare, is in purpose* bestowe a generall pardon vpon this nation with some exceptions; I beseche your Highnes to consider well of it: of myne owne tyme this prooffe I haue; in the proclayming of these mountayne Traytours a generall pardon was graunted to all, certayn of the chief exempted, that would leaue the rest, & reward withall sett downe, to whomesoeuer should bring in aliuie {or}* dead any of the Archknaues; since agayne infinite secrete offers of pardon and hire haue I made to the chieffest for seruice vpon other chieffs: nay further haue I aduentured my self vpon your grace in maner against one of my Instructions from your self at my coming away; I offerd to Desmond him selfe pardon, in case he would quick or dead deliuer into mee his brother Iohn & Doctor Saunders; which most easely I knew he might haue doen, being hourelly & forcelesse in his hand: what of all these offers is hearkned to, what thancks is giuen, what submission is made, what grace accepted? nay in trouth Madam I neuer fownd but these mercifull dealinges haue euer lifted them vp to greater insolencies, nether holdes this my experience by the tyme of their most prosperitie, but in their most ebbe and misery hath lenitie fownd this effect: after the Fortes wyning passed my offer to Desmond since my coming into these partes very lately after many spoiles &* slaughters executed vpon Pheagh and his followers, so that his self demaunded the Parley; sondry tymes like grace hath bene graunted, but in end Beggars fall to pride, raile at your Maiestie leaue god, & onely relye vpon the Pope, & that charges shall in end free them: herevnto laye for the good that pardons here worke, that in Sir William fitz Williams tyme there was like to this now entended a graunt of generall Pardon, and therevpon a great number were sent abroad, but somuch regarded, as three partes of them yett lye in Kilkenny, and neuer once asked for, as I am credibly enformed: to bee shorte vnder your Highnes correction pardon & protection next to the small care had of trew Religion & settling of Gods Worde hath bene the onely destruction of this Gouvernment which triall enforceth me to say, that

onely sworde will salue the sore of. for the contrary I dare defend to haue essayed as much as any Governour toofore, & will tye my selfe to your Maiesties iustice onely, yf it can be iustly layd vnto mee, that euer yet I tooke lyfe from any, how euer euill deseruing that submitted him self to your mercy: feare therefore and not dandling must bringe them to the byarsse of obedience.

I would gladly receiue your Highnes resolution touching 63. yt is a cause requireth not your least consideration: I did in my last say what I thought in it: very fewe that in priuate friendshippe {..... • ••••}, nether that I thincke more {..... •• •••} 7. in any {..... ••••} onely excepted: thus doothe faythfull dutie & sincere* affection too 7. {..... •••} of {•••} that which ootherwyse {•• •••, •••••, •• •••••},*

The Bearer now bringeth your Highnes an estimate of the benefitt that vpon these attaynders will fall to your Maiestie and he shall likewise enforme you of a Plott for the lightening your Highnes of 2000 mens pay by yeare, which in God I hope shall take effecte in short tyme, in case your Highnes shall thinck good to answeare wantes here, & the same presently vpon the coming of the supplye now appointed hether shalbee entered into. /

I beseche God to direct your Highnes resolution to that course, that may most make for your owne honour & reformation of this yet most miserable nation vtterly deuoyde of his knowledg, & nowhitt regarding you his annoynted nor guided by any other rule then sensuall libertie.

So fearing to haue held your Highnes too long, though not so long as the cause yet requires, were yt not in trust of the Messenger, whome I humbly commend to your Maiesties credit for the rest I take most humble leaue, beseeching the Almighty to prolong your lyfe in all happinesse in this world, and send your Maiesty eternall ioy in that to come. Dublin the 26 of Aprill, 1581.

Yowr hyghnes most humble seruant
& faythfull subiect,

Arthur Grey

Textual Notes

* **own]** Inserted above the line.

* **of these]** Inserted above the line.

* **warre]** 's' deleted at the end of this word.

* **after purpose]** 'to' deleted.

* **{or}]** A large inkblot has obscured this word, but the reading is obvious from the context.

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

* **dutie & sincere]** A deletion of about eight illegible characters appears *after dutie &*; 'sincere' has been inserted above the line.

* **{..... . . .}** This long passage includes several sections in an illegible cipher, distinct from that used in Grey's letters to Walsingham.

Annotations

this Bearer] Very possibly Rowland Cowick, formerly Clerk of the Council, who attended the Privy Council bearing a commendatory letter from the Irish Council (SP 63/82/55), also dated 26 April, and a petition (SP 63/82/55/1), describing his loss of cattle and sheep at the hands of the 'mountayne Rebels' in an attack on his farm in September 1580.

lately to your Highnes selfe] It is not clear to which letter to the Queen Grey here refers. He had recently written letters to Leicester (SP 63/81/25, 12 March) on 'the arrogant traytor Tyrllowghe' and his 'dishonorable & most danegerous temporisinges', and also to Burghley (SP 63/81/27, 13 March).

tickle hoalde] I.e. the precarious control exercised over Turlough Luineach. Cf. 'your onely losse is the fyne, which surely the tickle hold & vse of land here, as dayes now are, & the generall extreme pouerty with all weighed, can growe to no great accoumpt' (Grey to Queen Elizabeth, 25 January 1581/2, SP 63/88/39).

Tirlagh] In his recent letter to Leicester (SP 63/81/25, *supra*), Grey had spoken of Turlough Luineach's continued reinforcement with Scottish galloglas, with whom, he says, 'hee sustaynethe the rebells of Connaught'. He repeats here his point, recently made to the Privy Council, that 'want of force' leads them to settle for a 'trustless peace' with Turlough Luineach, and asks for greater supply of money and men.

the Marschalls ... Highnes] The **Marschall** is Nicholas Bagenal, Knight Marshall (see biographies). This letter does not seem to be enclosed, but may be catalogued elsewhere.

nowhitt darkly display] Clearly reveal.

mammering] 'Hesitating' (*OED*), either in the sense that they are in a precarious state (cf. 'tickle hoalde'), or that their affection for Elizabeth is hesitant.

how nerely yt toucheth me] How particularly it concerns me.

though shewe haue not brought forth the effecte] 'Even if, in the course of things, the worst-imagined scenarios did not come to pass'.

if ... I exceede any thing the limits of becoming] If I am being at all improper.

miscarriage] Misconduct.

the encrease ... for] There seems to survive no 'late' (recent) letter from Grey to Elizabeth requesting such an increase in troops. In SP 63/82/41 (19 April), the Privy Council had communicated Elizabeth's refusal to give Grey more than the thousand troops promised, though when Grey speaks here (see below) of Elizabeth's *intention* to issue a general pardon, it suggests that these letters had perhaps not yet reached him.

composicion] Agreement.

contayned ... his owne will] I.e. any composition with Turlough will amount to his drawing up conditions according to his own will, and with only his personal inclination to determine whether he will abide by the agreement.

front] Confront.

out] Out in rebellion, in open rebellion.

that I might ... helpe yt] I.e. I wish my capacity to reduce the charge was as great as my desire to do so.

the charge vnwonted] I.e. the unusually high charge arising from the Irish service comes from a uniquely precarious situation.

the Lord Generall] The Lord General of Munster was Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond (see biographies).

Kerry a farre remoued place] Kerry is one of the furthestmost southwesterly counties of Ireland, remote from Dublin and from Turlough Luineach's movements in the North.

griued at your charges] Cf. Privy Council to Grey, 19 April 1581 (SP 63/82/41): 'her Maiestie looking narrowly into the present charges she is at in that realme and finding the same so exceeding great as in deed they are'.

sclenderly answered in seruice] Slenderly, or slightly, repaid, by Grey's services and successes.

nether doo ... certein grownd] I.e. I hope that you will not judge our fortunate successes or defaults – which are out of our control – by such a rigid standard. Grey encourages the Queen, rather, to judge his, and his officers', 'endeuour ... trauaile & aduerture'.

ouerslipped] Omitted.

I haue not euer certefied of] I have not always accounted for, written about.

Kerne] See glossary.

churles] Base men and servants.

a Colleccion] SP 63/82/54/1, enclosed with this letter. This note lists the following services done by Grey, and points out the letters in which they are described: 'Twentie rebell slaine and two hurte by their owne report but lx supposed to be slaine and some hurte' (in a letter from Grey to Elizabeth, 28 August 1580); 'Threscore rebelles wherof some greate harme doers to the pale slaine by our horsemen' (in a letter from the Council of Ireland to the Privy Council, 18 September 1580); 'The forte at smerwick yelded simply, 600 slaine there' (in a letter from Grey to Elizabeth, 12 November 1580); 'Sir Nicholas Malby followeth the E. of Clan. sonnes hottlie and hath hanged the pledges of Vlick burk in gallowey', and 'Sir William Stanley toke a prairie from the rebell in Leinster and after slew Feagh mac Hughes brother and divers of the rebelles' (in a letter from Grey to the Privy Council, 14 January 1580/1). Only the third of these letters (SP 63/78/29, *supra*) seems to survive among the Irish State Papers. This collection of services suggests that the volume of correspondence from Ireland to England was substantially higher than that preserved in the extant records, and also indicates that Grey's secretaries kept detailed letter-books, listing and describing the letters sent not only by Grey but also by the Council.

carried] Conducted.

ether in conceipt or execution] Either in that I can imagine such a thing, or bring it about.

to be called home] These requests for revocation become ever more frequent in subsequent correspondence.

brideled] Restrained; as a horse is by its bridle.

stealth] Secret theft.

rapes] Violent acts of theft. The word had its contemporary meaning by that time, too (*OED*, *n.*²).

a proteccion is demaunded] Grey means that anybody called in on such a charge will demand a document or assurance ('proteccion') that they will not be arrested.

he wilbee ... terme yt] To be **upon one's keeping** is to be on one's guard, in this case ready to defend oneself, and one's case ('cause') by force.

forepast charges] Previous expenditures and costs.

plott] Design, plan.

& travaile enough well entended too] And work enough in itself, if well attended to.

shall any ... warre causes] The syntax here is knotty, but Grey's sense is clear enough: I would have work enough in civil and political government; why should I add military travails, if it were not necessary?

a generall pardon] On 19 April 1581, Elizabeth had issued a general pardon to all Irish rebels apart from Desmond, John of Desmond, Dr Sanders, Viscount Baltinglass, and the Seneschal of Imokilly (the latter on Grey's discretion). A draft of the pardon (with corrections by Burghley) exists in the Irish State Papers (SP 63/82/42), as does a draft of a letter from the Privy Council explaining the pardon, and telling Grey that 'in case you resolue to enter into anie action of warre agaynst Tirlaghe,

wee then thincke it verie meete that you should fyrst offer vnto him confirmation of suche thinges as by your Lordship weare thought meet to be allowed vnto him' (SP 63/82/41).

these mountayne Traytours] Such as the Cavanaghs and Birnes (O'Byrnes), against whom he would shortly make a campaign (see SP 63/83/45, *infra*). Cf. 'It is now x dayes since owre happie generall pardon was proclaymed, & yet no one offer from any of the Mountayne rebels' (SP 63/84/26, *infra*).

for seruice vpon other chieffs] Evidence of the English administration's desire to take (and sponsor) sides in local, factional disputes, as a way of purchasing obedience from certain rebels.

I aduentured ... your grace] On Grey's initial departure for Ireland, a number of memoranda were drawn up to give him directions for his service, or to direct discussion among the Privy Council about those directions (see SP, 63/74/37-40: Burghley's hand is evident in the drafting and correcting of these memoranda). No notes concerning Desmond survive, but one might extrapolate from Grey's remark that he was instructed to pursue Desmond without offer of pardon.

Desmond him selfe] No record of this pardon seems to exist.

quick or dead] Alive or dead

his brother Iohn & Doctor Saunders] John of Desmond and Dr Nicholas Saunders; see biographies.

houerly & forcelesse in his hand] Since they were in his power, continually and with no need for any force.

in their most ebbe] In their greatest misfortune (the **ebb** is the flowing of tidal water back to the sea).

the Parley] A meeting to discuss a truce.

Beggars fall to pride] This sounds proverbial, and the association of beggary and pride is certainly conventional (e.g. 'Behold I come, to let you see the Pride | With which Exalted Beggars always Ride', Daniel Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman*, lines 608-09), though no contemporary usages can be found.

& that charges shall in end free them] This seems to repeat the earlier boast: that the English will be forced to leave Ireland, or to stop prosecuting the rebels, because of the cost.

Sir William fitz Williams tyme] William Fitzwilliam was Lord Deputy between December 1571 and September 1575 (and would be appointed again between 1588 and 1594).

three partes of them] Uncertain. Perhaps three quarters of them.

the small care had] An unusually explicit voicing of concern for the religious failings of reform.

onely sworde will salue the sore] Grey's commonly expressed opinion, that the obedience of the Irish can only be achieved through compulsion, not voluntarily. See Bradshaw (1978).

dandling] Pampering.

byarsse] Perhaps the bias, or leaning, towards obedience.

attaynders] Indictments for treason; traitors forfeited their goods and lands to the crown upon attainder, and their blood was said to be corrupted, so that neither title nor possession might pass to the heir.

sensuall libertie] Cf . the 'libertye and ill examples' of the Anglo-Irish that Spenser describes in *A view* (ll. 1951-2133) and the sensual government of Ireland that Grey describes to Walsingham in May 1581 (SP 63/83/16).