

TNA: PRO SP 63/84/13*Grey to the Privy Council, 10 July 1581*

It is difficult to tell whether Grey was deeply alarmed by the report of a war between Turlough Luineach O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell in Tirconnell or whether, by contrast, he was using it to generate a plausible case for further supply from England. Malby certainly seems not to have left Dublin in any great hurry; as late as 18 July he was writing to Walsingham to ask him to favour him with alterations to his title of Roscommon, and was collecting a concordatum from the Irish council for reimbursement of his expenses in Connaught. In any case, this letter gives a vivid picture not only of the mutability of Irish affairs, but of the substantial hardship suffered by the soldiers on both sides. The text of the letter, with the address, is in Spenser's characteristic secretary hand, here bold and hasty. Grey has added the subscription and signature in his own hand. The endorsement, probably added later when the letter was being filed in London, is entirely in a broad-nibbed and inelegant secretary hand.

Address and Endorsement

To the right
 Honorable the
 Lords & other of
 her Maiesties
 privie councill. /

Lordes. 1581
 Dublyn the xth of Iuly
 From the Lord Deputie

Text

My very good Lords; since my last aduertizementes sent vnto your Lordships I have received knowledge of a certein bickering which was lately betwene Tirlagh, & ODonell in the which there were certein of Odonelles chief capteins taken & slayne, besides many other of his men. which quarell now by them begonne yt is here by vs thought good to mainteigne, least yf happely otherwise then well should happen to the said Odonell, besides the great discouragement, which yt would generally strike into the hartes of such the Irishrie (how euer fewe) as have carried them selues well & duetifully towards her Maiestie to see them selues in most distresse lefte aidlesse yt would moreouer adde great stomach & haughtines to thenemy to oppresse the true Subiect, seeing him so destitute. For such occasion my self with the advice of the rest of the councill here, have thought yt expedient presently to make a iorney into those partes, which being of so great importaunce, as yt is, & fynding that not onely her Maiesties threasure here is clene emptied but also all this Cittie so bare & needy as no money is here to be borrowed for

the necessary furnishing & provision of all such thinges as to this or any other iorney apperteyne, I am earnestly to crave of your Lordships that requisite consideracion may hereof bee had for present supply of this extremitie, vpon which all the successe of this entreprice & generall service here besides dependeth, not knowing otherwise how to take the same in hand, by reason that bakeres & breweres cannot be sett on worke, nor conveyance by sea had for vittailles, beside infinite occasions of present paymentes that such expeditions will of necessitie require together with the daylie charge of carriage for vittelles to the places of garrizons here aboutes with the contynuall cry of the soldier for his private pay

All which referring to your Lordships gravest consideracion and earnestly praying that such speedy care hereof may bee had as the weightines of the cause requireth I humbly take leave. Dublin the xth of Iulie 1581

Yowr Lordships most assured
to Commaund,

Arthur Grey

Since the wryting hereof I heare that Odonelles losse hath bene more extreme then the first report & that his whole force is in maner ouerthrowen & that Tirlagh remayneth yett in Tirconell spoiling & slaying at his pleasure. /

I have appointed Sir Nicholas Malbey with thenglish forces in Connagh and such Irish as he can vppon the soddein levy within his Rules to repaire to Odonell to his assistaunce And if the cause so require to meet me at Liffer at a day appointed.

Annotations

bickering] Cf. the wording of TNA Sp 63/84/14

Tirlagh] Turlough Luineach O'Neill; see biographies.

ODonnell] Sir Hugh O'Donnell, Lord of Tirconnell; see biographies.

mainteigne] To support O'Donnell against O'Neill, 'maintaining' his right against him.

stomach] Boldness of spirit.

those partes] Tirconnell, which lies to the west of O'Neill's country in Ulster, in what is now Donegal.

the contynual cry of the soldier for his private pay] The Dublin government found itself permanently in arrears in the pay of its soldiers; because the life expectancy of a soldier in Ireland was short, behindhandedness proved an astute policy.

I heare ... the first report] None of the dispatches reaching Grey from Tirconnell were forwarded; none survive. But this note is interesting because it clearly demonstrates the fast pace of changing information and the degree to which responsive government had to be capable of mobilizing quickly.

in maner] Almost entirely (*OED*, 'Manner', *n.* 13).

spoiling] Destroying (by burning and looting) the local towns and fields.

Connagh] Malby was the English governour of the province of Connaught and Thomond, but he was often in Dublin; see biographies. On this occasion he appears to have marched to Lifford from Athlone, where he raised his forces (see 63/85/47, his report to Burghley after the journey into Tyrconnell). He claimed to Burghley that, following O'Neill's peace with Grey, he camped with 500 men before O'Neill's 2,500, for five days. He was back in Dublin by 20 September.

within his Rules] It is not clear whether Grey means 'within the province' (i.e. of Connaught), or 'within the limits of his licence to do so'.

at Liffer] Lifford, on the opposite bank of the Mourne from Strabane, in Tirconnell.