

TNA: PRO SP 63/85/5*Grey to the Queen, 10 August 1581*

This letter's main business is to present an official and formal account of Grey's recent meeting with Turlough Luineach O'Neill at the Blackwater, with his attempts to resolve O'Neill's recent war with Sir Hugh O'Donnell (also described, as a 'bickering', in SP 63/83/13 and 63/83/14, *supra*). Grey had requested more troops from England to guard against Turlough Luineach's threat to the Pale, but his requests had been denied; furthermore, when sending over information about the proclamation for general pardon in April 1581, the Privy Council had specifically urged Grey to offer reconciliation and pardon to Turlough Luineach: '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). What we see in this letter is Grey's attempt, once again, to criticize this 'temporizing' course of action: he repeats that it has been ordered by 'your Highnes councell', not by himself, he anticipates the failure of the composition that he had predicted in earlier letters ('in case he shall refuse to stand to the order'), and he claims to be vindicated in his prediction (cf. SP 63/82/54) that few rebels would accept the terms of the pardon: 'I heare of very few & none indeed of accoumpt that make any reckoning of the pardons your Highnes wonted great mercy vnworthely, as it shewes, hath vouchsafed'. Finally, he returns (cf. SP 63/83/45) to Ormond's dismissal as Lord General of Munster, and gives the impression that the vacancy provides an opportunity for him to forward the claims of Colonel John Zouche.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this letter is its account of Grey's negotiations with Turlough Luineach's wife, the Scots noblewoman Agnes Campbell (see biographies). In complete contrast to Grey's account of Turlough Luineach himself, whom he presents as fickle, emotional, and neurotic, Campbell comes across in Grey's account as shrewd and serious, an able negotiator and someone whose word (almost despite himself) Grey seems to respect. Unlike Turlough Luineach, who admits to certain dealings with the rebels at one time, and denies them at another, Grey's brief report of Agnes Campbell reveals an adversary who neither temporises nor lies, neither boasts nor defies. It is unusual for Grey to report his dealings with an Irish rebel (or, for that matter, Palesman) without offering some incidental insult or expression of contempt, but Agnes Campbell receives neither.

The other interesting aspect of this letter is Grey's approach to his other female interlocutor, the Queen. Grey had made it clear in the letters sent to Walsingham before his departure for the Blackwater that he planned to take the matter of Turlough Luineach's petitions into his own hands, despite the fact the Captain Piers was still in transit on a direct embassy between O'Neill and the Queen. Grey seems also to have played false with the Queen's instructions, claiming before his departure that he had not received them, but, upon his return, that he had discovered them after the fact; at the very least, Grey exploited his opportunity in mid-July to race northward against Turlough Luineach without the burden of the Queen's direction. The treaty he then

concluded was designed, as he patiently recounts here, to capitulate to O'Neill in all points – Grey conceded all his demands and established the peace without requiring pledges or other security. Grey's gamble was that O'Neill would break his own agreement and, having had ground given him on all points, would have no further defence against the charge of faithlessness and ambition. Crucial to this project was Grey's pretence in this letter of absolute submission to the Queen's pacific policy; his politic attempts to satisfy and defy what he took to be her capricious ignorance leave him looking distinctly less noble than Agnes Campbell, who seems to have served an equally difficult master with perhaps greater integrity.

The text of the letter, with the address, is in Spenser's formal Italian hand, the norm for official letters from the Lord Deputy to the Queen. Grey has decorously added his own subscription and signature at the right foot of the final page. The endorsement, in a later hand, was probably added by a clerk handling the letter during the filing process.

Address and Endorsement

To the Queenes
most excellent
Maiesty./

10.^o Augusti 1581
From the Lord Deputy of Irelande
to the Queenes Maiesty

Entred./.

Text

It may please your Highnes vpon the contention betwixt Tirlagh & Odonell and an ouerthrow therein fallen to Odonell (as formerly I aduertized thether) yt was by your Highnes councell here thought necessary, that I with some parte of your forces here should make to Tirlogh ward, both for the saving of Odonelles vtter spoile & suppressing, (who since my coming, hath euer most duetifully carried him self) as also to stay the sayd Tirloghs further attemptes against the Pale, which reason gaue greatly to bee mistrusted, or rather certainly looked for. The order & purpose of my expedition was this; Liffer is a Riuer, that parteth Tyrone & Tirconell: vpon yt are twoo castelles, the one called the Liffer the other Strabane; these Castelles are the onely keyes of Odonnelles cuntry towards Tirloghs: Sir Nicholas Malbey I directed with fowre Companies that he had in Connagh and his horssmen to ioyne that way with Odonell & so drawe downe to the Liffer. My self with eight Companies of Foot. & 300 Horss. to marche by the black water, & to meete them at the sayd Castle: the purpose was to haue taken these Castelles & deliuered the one into Odonelles handes, namely the Liffer, & into Strabane to haue putt an English warde; in case Tirlogh came not vnto me to the black water. This

plott layde; a day or two before I entred on my iorney, I dispatched lettres to* Tirlogh signifying vnto him that bycause I heard of a great stirre betwene him & Odonell, & the same to haue gone further then I liked, or ought on their sydes, in case theyr dueties* to your Highnes had rightly bene weighed, I could not but put them both in mynd of them selues, & for theyr owne behoofes & quiett of their Countreys take the traueill to repaire into those partes, for the appeasing of the quarrell, and therefore willed him to surcease from further forceable dealing against Odonnell, & with all convenient speed to repaire vnto mee to the Black water, where I would endeuour to compownd the cause betwixt Odonell & him, & besydes emparrt somewhat vnto him of your Highnes pleasure concerning parte of his Petitions: which though I had not then receiued, yett knowing that the same would be no small cause to draw him to talk, & hauing besydes former direction from my Lords of your Councell to vse myne owne discretion in yt, for the holding of quietnes with him, I tooke the boldenes to giue him that knowledg. On my way now* at Dundalk lettres from Tirlogh mett mee that he would meete me, as I had appointed him, & that he had vpon my warning surceased from further invading of Odonell; marry that he merueiled why I should make such præparation as he heard of to take his Castelles, which to præuent he signified that he had broken & in maner razed, as indeed he had. In my answeere to these I did comfort him to the meeting, I willed him not lightly to credit rumors, I doubted not but he should bee well satisfied in all thinges at our meeting, wherevnto I referred the rest.

So I came to the Black water, where I stayed twoo or three dayes before I heard any thing of him, in no small lacke both of Beoffe & grasse; yet to auoyd all causes of quarrell on his part (farre against nature I confesse) I would nether remoue to the farsyde being his Countrey, nor yett take a Cowe of the Galloglasses, whose creat lyeth all on this syde vpon your Maiesties owne grownd without answering you any rent, nor yett owing you, at least affoording you any trowth or alleageaunce, but in good or euill holde to him & bend against you. At the last he comes, & first he sendes his wyfe vnto me both for the appointing of the place for the Parlea, as also to impart vnto mee some of his griefes: the place he desyred might bee vpon the Riuer, hee on the one syde, and I on the other: his griefes were partly for iniuries doen him by the Baron of Dunganon, & agayne that his Messenger (so he termed him) Captein Piers was so long stayed with his Petitions: I answered that the Place was very vnfit, for the Riuer beeing betwixt, causes of such weight could nether bee well debated, nether was yt convenient that euery stander by should bee priuie to the thinges that therein were to passe, which in this sorte could not bee eschewed; I wished therefore that either he would come to my Campe vpon sufficient Saufconduct or Protection, or els that wee might meete* in the playne field, equall numbers on eyther syde appointed. As touching his griefes, I sayde that whatsoever iustly could bee challenged by him not onely of the Baron, but any other Subiect, he should bee assured of all iustice that was in mee to helpe him too, & that hisself knewe, how I had purposely appointed Commissioners for the taking of order in those causes. Concerning Captein Piers his stay, that I looked euery howre for his retourne, & that I tooke his stay now rather to growe vpon his owne particulare businesse, then that he was not dispatched by your Highnes neuerthelesse that I had receiued some notice of your pleasure in some of his Petitions, which I was to emparte vnto him, in case I found his dealings to answeere the office of a good & duetifull

Subject; I added to this that as he seemed to fynd him self griued with the forereckened causes, I was no lesse but more iustly to complayne of his carriage, first that he had often made shew of armes against the state, espetially at such tymes, as he fownd me bent to iorneyes against your Maiesties open Rebelles, that he demaunded iustice still by force, that he was a dayly receaver of Traitours messengers, & by their owne reportes a Combiner with them, that contrary to his peace late made and sworne with the late Earle of Essex, namely that he should apprehend & deliuer any Traitour, that should come vnto him, & bee demaunded of him, he of late flatly refused it to the Knight Marschall, who hauing knowledg that William Nugent was with him, did earnestly demaunde him of him, lastly that before any complaint exhibited & redresse required at your Maiesties handes, he had invaded & fought with Odonnell one of your Highnes good & duetifull subiects. In her reply to this, the best shee could say, was, that the dislike her husband had taken agaynst the Baron, had carried him into farther shewes of offence, then he indeed euer meant, neither that messengers from the Traitours had bene with her Husband could she denye, but that he euer combined with them, that she withstood, nether could she excuse the charge for William Nugent, Odonolles matter shee defended, in that Odonell had first broken truce, & sett vpon her husband: finally whether her Husband would come into my Camp, or haue talke any otherwise, then that the Riuer might part vs, she doubted, but the next morning early that I should haue knowledg: so shee departed. His answeere the next day was, that onely vpon the riuer he would speake with me: as force was, I agreed, thincking that yt might yet bee an enteraunce to further talke by Commissioners, to how small purpose soeuer yt otherwise were: as I meant yt, so by his owne request occasion fell out; for after a very litle talke with him, hisself required, that bycause of the vnaptnes of the place, & inconuenience it might bring to the cause, to haue so many hearers, I would send ouer some Commissioners to treat with him of the affaires, the choice I tolde him was his owne fault, yet since I was content in the worse to assent to him, I wold not refuse it in the better, & so I presently sent ouer Iustice Dowdhall & Lodouick Briskett our Clerk of the Councell here with Instructions; in summe these, that the Peaces heretofore taken & covenanted by him with Sir Henry Sidney late Gouvernour & the Earle of Essex should stand & bee performed by him; next that the cause now betwixt him & Odonell should bee heard & determined by such Commissioners as I should appoint; lastly that for performaunce hereof he should putt in* such Ostages as I should require or lyke of; To stand to the former peaces he vtterly refused; marry to holde the Composition that with me he tooke this last year, he was content till Captein Piers his retourne with your Highnes resolution to his demaundes. To putt the cause betwixt him & Odonell to Commissioners, with much adoe he was thus farre brought, that by my Commissioners yt should be heard but adjudged onely by my self. Pledges for performaunce of these, he in maner disdayned to heare of, to bee sworne to the keeping of these Conditions, was all the surety that could be wonne of him; the conditions of his part consisted onely to haue former orders (by the Commissioners therefore appointed) against the Baron of Dunganon & others for iniuries towards him & his executed by a day, as he likewise was to answeere right, for such as were on his peace by the same orders, & that all wronges hereafter to happen, should likewise be tyed to the Commissioners order.

Thus is there a peace with him concluded, which though nether for the surety of yt, nor honour I can greatly commend, yet weighing the dislike your Highnes carryeth to enter into force with him, & besides hauing by your Highnes Lords of Councell there bene giuen to vnderstand, that by any meanes to holde him in, & temporize with him should bee accepted for no small good seruice, I haue endeoured in all that I might to frame the course to your Maiesties lyking & their Lordships direction; in discourse whereof though I haue bene the longer & perchaunce tœdious, I am to craue humble pardon, & withall to say for iust excuse therein, that fynding hard taking and diuersly construing of all my doings here hath willed me to lay before your Highnes the whole circumstance of the action, submitting the same to the censure your Highnes shall thinck yt to deserue.

And now I am humbly to craue your Highnes direction, how I shall deale with Tirlagh, in case he shall refuse to stand to the order that I shall award vpon the examyning of the cause betwene him & Odonell; & surely I feare, constraint must bee the cause, yf it doe take place: on the other syde your Highnes is to waye the great touch to your honour, besyde discouragement to others, yf Odonell bee lefte so to the others ravine & spoile without your protecting & assistaunce, considered that the thwart is happened him, chiefly for that he would neither come to composition with Tirlogh without our assent here, nor yet retayne any Scottes, being by vs forwarned thereof.

My next iorney, & that forthwith, God not letting shalbee to the Mountaynes here, whence I meane not to depart, till I haue broken that nest; whereof, with Gods fauour, I make no doubt, though some liues yt will cost.

I can certefy your Highnes of no great seruice doen by the garrisons there now in myne absence, for that yt hath pleased God, so to visite them with a pestilent feuer, as moe then half of the numbers are layde, & many haue dyed, so that rather to defend then offend they haue bene driuen: yf it bee not the Lords pleasure to stay this his hand, & to giue health to those that are fallen downe, surely Madam I shall not know what to doe without a new supply, or els to fill vp the bandes with Irish here, as continually by these accidents of sicknesse and running away of our English soldiers we are enforced to doe, a thing yett I cannot denye but very perillous.

Your Maiesty is to remember the gouernement of Mounster, & to resolue of some meet English man for yt, in the meane season the direction that from my Lords there I haue now receiued, shalbee followed. Iohn Zowtche, I heare, hath agayne donne a good service vpon those Rebelles & slayne about 60 of their kerne & Galloglasse.

I heare of very few & none indeed of accoumpt that make any reckoning of the pardons your Highnes wonted great mercy vnworthely, as it shewes, hath vouchsafed; well I pray god that the error of this clemency, yf it bee clemency, to spare iustice, bee not too late in this land fownde.

To conclude, I see that the sore of this countrey without force will not bee cured, I see that force is chargeable to your Highnes, I see that charge is grieuous & dislyking, I see, that it pleaseth not God to giue the short successe & end to things, that your Maiesty

expecteth, I see that my seruice thus becomes altogether condemned & disfauored, the contrary whereof, God I call to record, hath euer bene the onely proiect of my gayne: am I then to be blamed, if I seeke to bee rid of that, that causeth me my greatest grief, which is your disfauour, & putts me hopelesse of my greatest comfort, which is your Highnes fauour & good grace? I trust not, & therefore with all humblenes & duety I beseech your Highnes to haue consideration of mee, & take me from this place, which I perceauē, doe what I can, wilbee the dayly encrease of my hell & continuall stay of my blisse. And thus as he that desires no greater earthly happines of God, then in all thinges to serue & content your Maiestie I take most humble leaue, beseeching the same God alwayes to defend, direct & prosper your Highnes. Dublin. this xth of August. 1581./

Yowr Hyghnes moste humble seruant
& faythefull subiect,

Arthur Grey

Textual Notes

* *after lettres to]* 'him' deleted.

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* *after dueties]* 'doen' deleted.

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* *after way now]* 'to' deleted.

†

* **meete]** Inserted above the line.

†

* **in]** Inserted above the line.

Annotations

the contention ... Odonell] The attack by Turlough Luineach O'Neill upon Sir Hugh O'Donnell was reported in a letter of 10 July 1581 (SP 63/84/13, *supra*); in a related letter to Walsingham (SP, 63/84/14, *supra*), Grey again refers to the 'bickering betwene Tirlagh and Odonell'.

as formerly I aduertized thether] I.e. in the letters mentioned above, SP 63/84/13 and 63/84/14.

by your highness council] By the Irish Council.

to Tirlogh ward] In the direction of Turlough Luineach, i.e. towards his lands. See *OED*, '-ward', 6.

spoile] Ruin.

the sayd ... the Pale] Turlough Luineach's aggression in Tirconnell (in the northwest of Ireland) might give reason to suppose that he would move south.

which reason ... looked for] Which we had good reason to fear, or at least to be wary of.

Liffer ... Tyrone... Tirconell] The **Liffer** seems to be the River Foyle, which separates the counties of Tirconnell (the territory of the O'Donnells, roughly equivalent to the modern county of Donegal) and Tyrone, and on opposite sides of which the towns of Lifford and Strabane stand. On the boundary between the lands of Turlough Luineach and O'Donnell, they stand as the **only keyes** of O'Donnell's country.

warde] Keeper or garrison.

the black water] The Blackwater marks the boundary between County Tyrone in the North-west, and Armagh and Monaghan in the South and East. Turlough Luineach's approach to the Blackwater in August / September 1580 is recorded in a pair of letters from Dungannon to Grey copied in Spenser's hand (SP 63/76/6 and 63/76/7): the river marked a boundary of Turlough Luineach's territory.

This plott layde] Having devised this scheme.

in case ... weighed] If they were to consider

behoofes] Benefits (perhaps with the sense of ‘duties’, although *OED*, 2 cites this as a rare usage).

take the traueill] Take the trouble.

compownd the cause] Settle the matter (*OED*, ‘Compound’, v., 6).

for the holding . . . with him] To keep him in a state of quietness, of peace.

Dundalk] On the east coast of Ireland, in County Louth, approximately 80km north of Dublin and 30km away from the Blackwater.

broken & in maner razed] Cf. ‘yt hath bene thought good and concluded that David Barrie should be sent for to bee talked with, and to vnderstand the cause of the breaking of his castles’ (TNA SP 63/81/36/1 *supra*).

Beoffe] Oxen, or cattle.

(farre against nature I confesse)] A rather oblique remark. Either Grey remarks sardonically, even sarcastically, that a man of Turlough Luineach’s nature needs little excuse for a quarrell, or he seems to confess that this temporizing, non-confrontational course of action goes against his own nature.

Galloglasses] See glossary.

creat] See glossary.

but in good ... you] They pay their allegiance to Turlough Luineach, and not at all to Elizabeth.

his wyfe] Turlough Luineach’s wife was Lady Agnes Campbell, daughter of the Earl of Argyll; see biographies. Turlough Luineach regularly employed her as an intermediary.

Parlea] Parley.

griefes] Grievances.

iniuries ... Dunganon] Hugh O’Neill, Baron of Dungannon, who had enjoyed a tense, if not outright hostile, relation with Turlough Luineach (in no small part as a conflict over succession to the O’Neill lordship). Dungannon had in the previous year appealed for English help against Turlough Luineach’s menacing behaviour (see, for example, SP 63/75/84 above).

his messenger ... Petitions] This is William Piers (see biography), who had in 1580 negotiated with Turlough Luineach on behalf of the Crown. On the **Petitions** and the general pardon, see headnote.

in this sorte] In this way.

Saufconduct] Safe-conduct, a guarantee that he would not be arrested.

carriage] Conduct (although *OED*, *n.*, 14 gives the first usage of this (and associated) meaning of the term in the 1590s).

receaver of Traitours messengers] Perhaps alluding to the accusations relating to William Nugent (see below).

his peace ... Essex] Essex's campaign against Turlough Luineach in March and April 1574 ended with no lasting agreement, but after further actions by Essex against his land, Turlough Luineach eventually submitted in late June 1575 (see SP, 63/52/48/16-18).

he of late ... Marschall] The **Knight Marshall** is Nicholas Bagenal; see biographies. He had told Sir Francis Walsingham on 25 April (SP 63/82/52) that he and Grey suspected that Turlough Luineach had been practicing with **William Nugent**, the younger brother of Baron Delvin, and went into rebellion when Delvin was arrested with the Earl of Kildare, on suspicion of involvement with Viscount Baltinglass. On Nugent's rebellion, see Walshe (1990).

invaded & fought with Odonnell] For an account of and commentary upon Turlough Luineach's conflict with O'Donnell, see 63/84/13 and 63/84/14 (*supra*). Grey's accounts there certainly do not describe Turlough Luineach as a villain, or even the aggressor ('a certain bickering which was lately betwene Tirlagh, & ODonell'), even if O'Donnell seems to have come off worse: 'in the which there were certein of Odonelles chief capteins taken & slayne, besides many other of his men'.

Commissioners] Crown agents commissioned to investigate and adjudicate

occasion fell out] Things turned out; i.e. Turlough Luineach made the same request that Grey had.

Iustice Dowdhall] James Dowdall, at the time Second Justice of the King's Bench; see biographies.

Lodouick Bryskett] See biographies. Bryskett was also present, and involved in military discussions, at Smerwick. See SP 63/78/29 (*supra*).

the Peaces ... Essex] See note above.

for performaunce hereof] To ensure that he would perform this.

putt in such Ostages] Submit hostages or pledges, persons handed over as guarantees that the undertakings would be fulfilled.

stand to] Abide by (*OED*, 'Stand', v., 76).

the conditions ... same orders] Turlough Luineach's conditions are merely that Dungannon should have to answer charges for injuries against him, at the same time and before the same commissioners to whom he himself has to answer.

temporize] Negotiate in order to gain time.

in discourse whereof] In describing the course of action that I took.

fynding hard ... doings here] Seeing that all of my actions in service here are taken badly and misinterpreted

stand to] See above.

touch] Blow, blemish, injury.

ravine] Ravin: robbery or rapine.

the thwart is happened him] The injury has been committed to him.

pestilent feuer] Complaints about this plague, a common hazard of the Irish service, seem to have been particularly common during 1581. See HH Cecil Papers 11/91 (*supra*).

layde] Cast down.

the gouvernement ... English man] Ormond had been dismissed from his position as Lord General of Munster; Grey's call for a suitable 'English man' must surely be an implicit attack upon Ormond, and a call in favour of John Zouche.

the pardons] On the general pardon, see headnote.

I see ... disfaured] An impassioned anaphora, joined to a stirring if highly aggrieved gradatio.