

TNA: PRO SP 63/85/13*Grey to the Privy Council, 12 August 1581*

Grey probably returned from his journey into Ulster on 11 August, sending this report to the Privy Council on the following day. For evidence of careful political scheming, there are few letters in this collection to beat it: not only did Grey seize an unprecedented opportunity to catch Turlough Luineach on the back foot, by pinching him between Malby's forces (with O'Donnell) on the west, and his own from the south, thus forcing him to subscribe to a set of articles sent over to him by Grey's commissioners, Dowdall and Bryskett; but Grey perfectly orchestrated his own commission from London, timing his journey carefully in order to be able to claim ignorance, on his return, of the instructions he had meanwhile been sent from Westminster. Turlough's anxiety and distress at having been outfoxed come palpably through in Grey's account, and the measured, backhanded way in which Grey attributes his lenient course to his respect for the Queen's pacific preferences smacks of the Machiavellian adept. Of course Grey did not expect Turlough to keep the peace to which he had agreed – as he wrote to Walsingham just before leaving for Ulster (SP 63/84/26), he knew his course was safe because his negotiations, even if temporarily successful, would eventually prove fruitless – but the aim at Lifford was not to secure peace, but to create the defensible pretext for the open war with Turlough that Grey desired. Grey furthers this agenda later in this letter by underscoring the Dublin government's confidence in Sir Hugh O'Donnell (Turlough's antagonist), and resisting the Privy Council's incipient plans to divert military resources from Leinster and Connaught to Munster. This letter is also interesting because it provides the first report of the escape of the Baron of Lixnaw's sons from Limerick castle; these two pledges were all that kept Lord Fitzmorice in obedience, and he rebelled almost instantly. The secretaries handling this letter had before them a masterclass in high politics and the chess-like manipulation of men, ambitions, and commissions.

The text of the letter is in a neat and compact secretary (not Spenser's), familiar from many of the letters in this series. Spenser's own secretary hand appears in the address. Grey has penned the subscription and signature himself, in his characteristically awkward italic. A later hand has added substantial underlining throughout the text of the letter, probably in order to emphasise certain points to members of the Privy Council, to whom the letter would have been circulated upon receipt.

Address and Endorsements

To the Righte
 Honorable the
 Lords and otheres of
 {h}er Maiesties Privie
 {C}ouncell.*

12^o Augusti 1581

From the Lord Deputy of Irelande
to the Lordes of the Counsel.

Entred

Text

It may please your Lordships. I haue of late receaued 2: lettres from yow of the 26. and 30 of the laste, whiche came to my handes after I dispersed my companies in my retorne from my treaty with Turloughe Lennoughe: your Lordships I doubt not do remember what I aduertised in my last letters, touching the occacion of my late Iorneye northward, namely how odonnell had praied aide of hir maiesty, against Turloughe, or els for ever to bee lefte to shifte for him self, and that in our opinions heere, the losses sustained by him, coulde no way be repaired, nor Turloughe staid from the totall overthrowe of him, and his countrey vnlesse I had presently made hedd into those partes. According to whiche determinacion, I did not only sende Sir Nicholas Malbey, withe the forces vnder him in Connoughte, to enter Tierconnell, by the way of Sligo, and prepared victualls, and municion, to be sente by sea into Loughfoill, for suche services, as I purposed about Leefer, but marched in person, withe those few Companies, which I had to the forte vppon the black water, And in my way thether, I sente to Turloughe, to declare that having hearde somewhate of the violente manner of dealing betweene him, and odonnell, I could do no lesse, then deale betweene them, to the stopping of those contrauersies, and to heere and determine the causes, that had moued so greate outrages, and losse of so many hir maiesties subiectes* on bothe sides, being sorye that men of their condicion, and so well hable to serve hir highnes, should so farre exceede them selues as without lycense to enter into warre and to disturbe the state, And therefore I appointed him a place, and a tyme for conferrence and speache to be had in the matter: To this I was aunswered that he woulde repaier to the place, appointed, at the time I assigned, For the rumour of my coming had caused him, before this, to retorne from the Chace of odonnell, and heering of a preparacion heere for a battry to be sente, into Loughfoill, he gaue order for the rasing of his owne castle of Strabane, vppon that ryuer, and of the castle of Leefer, belonging to Con odonnell, on Tierconnell side: At the day appointed he came neere vnto the place withe a minde prepared altogether for warre, (so farre, as I could ghesse) notwithstanding he sente vnto me to know my pleasure, wherevppon I addressed the Iustice Dowdall, and Mr Briskett to treat with him vppon certaine articles, whiche I gaue them by way of Instrvccion, subscribed by me, and by Mr. Threasoror, and Mr Marshall, there withe mee, whiche articles with the aunsweres, or concludions of the peace I send vnto your Lordships heerewith, to avoyde tediousnes in my letter, only this I will note, that the Comissioners founde soche passions and alteracions in him, as weare straunge, before he Could bee temperede by them to enny conformity, But in the ende he was so handeled, as he sought withe humility, to come to the enterveue, but in soche mistrustfull manner as the riuer devided vs, So likewise when wee had concluded, sometyme he put of his hatte, and ioyed that he had peace, And by, and by an other difficulty grew, when he, and his followers should swere, and subscribe to the condicions, by whiche stormy manner of dealing, I note his vnsteddy nature, and how lytle truste is to bee hadd, ether to

his wordes, or wrytinges, and on the Contrary parte do comend the dealing of those gentlemen, in that they so ouercame his obstinacy, withe perswacon, as the dignety of the state was preserved, and he wrought to seeke whatesoeuer I desired, althoughe the most efficient causes indeade were the forces, by whiche he feared Invasion on bothe sides: And whereas sondry speaches, had bene geuen forthe by the rebelles, that he was a principall partie in the rebellion, and had promised ayde, to them from tyme, to tyme, after he had subscribed, he protested, that he had neuer made enny soche othe, or promise to enny rebell, thoughe sondry had sente vnto him for that purpose which he offred to advow before enny, that would so charge him. The comissioners had in Charge also to deliuer the proclamacion of generall pardon, whiche for all the prouince of Vlster was proclaimed without enny exception, But when yt was made knowne in his Campe yt moued not enny man there, to take the benefyt of yt, for they saied yt concerned offendoures, and offences, whereof there was none in Vlster of that qualety; Turloughes wief seemed earnestly to further this pacificacion, being fearefull of the double force, whiche bothe she saw with me, and hearde to be Coming with odonnell vnder Sir Nicholas Malbey, by whiche I must confesse to your Lordships I might haue taken soche an occacion to haue dishabled Turloughe for euer doing hurte to the pale, as hardely Can be founde soche an oportunitye, but that I know hir maiesties inclinacion so bente, vppon temporising withe a calme, and a peceable cours, as I would not enter into a matter of warre, that afterwarde might lacke dew prosecution, And therefore having sente the Iustice Dowdall, and other comissioners of Turloughes into Tierconnell to attende Sir Nicholas Malbey, for composition to be taken betweene him and odonnell, I accepted the peace before mencioned nothing pleasing to me, thoughe I assure my self, yt will be better thought of at home, then a warre that might haue brought forthe, bothe an honourable and a perpetuall assuraunce against the Northe: After this pacificacion, and my retorne from the place, I receaued (as I haue formerly sayed) your Lordships letters, withe whiche I finde the articles agreed vppon by hir maiesty, to Turloughes petitions, and for sondrye respectes am glad, that they came not sooner to my handes, For althoughe the grauntes are very honourable, and more liberall in some thinges, then I Coulede haue perswaded, if I had bene there, yet the condicions, wherevnto he should be tied be such as are verye beneficiall to the state, and suche, as he will neuer accept, For that whiche tendethe to the banishmente of the Scottes, will neuer be yelded vnto by his wief, and hir frendes, neither would he haue consented to yeld anny pledges, And then if he had falne from the condicions, and hir maiesty, not bente to haue maintayned hir purpose by force, yt would presently haue geuen an end of all his expectacion from Englande, and made him perhappes desperate in the rest, as by all likelihoode he may be, Neuertheles if Capten Peirs, his messenger (of whome your Lordships wryte) be not verye circumspect how to reveale thes thinges, or to vse warely his message, and soche matter as his master fantasieth in his platte of Vlster, And in troathe I finde yt very straunge, that enny soche messenger should be sente, without first being directed hether, to acquainte me withe the Cours he purposeth to take, and to enfourme him self by the state heere, what hath passed, and how farre he may goe in reason, in thes Treaties withe Turloughe For how muche Capten Peirs misconceaueth in thes matters, and is abused in his opinion may appeare to your Lordships by the aunswere of euery article of his platte, Whereunto wee haue postilde, whiche I speake not in disgrace of the man, whome indeade I loue, and wishe to be holpen in his particuler, and that he may be vsed in trust in those seruices,

wherewith he is acquainted, ether in the ardes, or Clandeboy, But that he hathe enny Creddyt at all with Turloughe, (but in the way of good fellowship, whiche lastethe no longer then that humour Continuethe) I haue suff{ic}yent proof, and very good cause to iudge, And what golden mountaines soeuer are promised, ether by his messages, or my peace now Concluded, I assure your Lordships I accept yt none otherwise than thankeworthye; then as patched stuffe that Cannot longe houlde. For the intollerable pride and insolencye of Turloughe is soche, as Cannot be contynued within the bondes of duetye to hir maiesty, or good neighbourid to hir highnes subiectes This only benefitt I take of the peace now Concluded, and of the time now wonne, that I may, as soone as I Canne fornish me of a conuenient proportion of victuall, marche to the mountaines, and breake ether that broode, or retorne with the losse, for vpon tryall of goddes will ether in the one, or the other, I am constauntlye determined. Your Lordships in your letter wisshed my staye from the borders, in respecte of the trobles of other partes, But I thought yt most conuenient to take this oportunitye, by whiche I suppose the hope, whiche they conceaued in Turloug{he} is cutt of from the confederates in all partes, so as now the oconnours, beginne to make meane vnto mee to bee receaued, and so do some of the obirnes, and the base brother of the Baron of Delvin, all whiche bothe before and in the time of the treaty withe Turloughe, and till the peace was published, had no regard at all to the proclamacion of pardon

And thus muche I thought meete to say aswell in declaracion of my late Iorney northward, as in aunswere of your Lordships lettre of the 30 of Iuly: Your Lordships other letter of the xxvj. of Iuly. concernethe the good acceptacion of Iohn Zouches service, the opinion of the reuolte of Odonnelles sonne, and the placing of Sir Warham Sentleger colonell of the forces in Mounster.

To the first I am very glad in the behalfe of the gentleman, that hir maiesty and your Lordships do so well conceaue of Mr Zouche, which opinion may be bettered, by a secound service, done since, wherein he hathe had very good Successe, and hathe slaine, & taken of the erle of Desmoundes followers of good accoumpt, and redused Kerrye in manner to depende wholly vpon him, Neuertheles, I feare that an accidente lately happened, will put his service there in some Daunger, for I am enfourmed, that by the negligence of one Sherif viceconstable in the Castle of Limerick, and by the practise (as yt is thought) of some of the Citizens, the Lord Fitzmorice two sonnes, and two other pledges are escaped, whereby yt is likely that all Fitzmorice his countrey, willbe distempered, I can geue no remedy to this misadventure, but by seueare punishment of the partie to preuente the like negligence, or abuse in men of his sorte heereafter.

Secoundly for Odonnelles sonne, supposed by Capten Peirs to haue revolted, and to be supported by his fosterfathers, there hathe bene no cause of enny soche Concept, for nether hathe his sonnes, (who are of age but Childeren) so fallen from their father, nether hathe enny of the countrey left him, but mainteyned his quarrells with expence of their bloode, sauing a few followers of Con odonnells, his nephew Whose ambicion, & desire to haue the captency, hathe moued this sturre, and diuers other heeretofore depending euer since the deathe of his father Culloughe odonnell, vpon the Captens of Tirone in the time of Shane oneyll, and euer since vpon Turloughe Lennoughe.

Thirdely for Sir Warham Seintleger, to be Cheif Collonell in Mounster, I like well of your Lordships Choice of the gentleman, to supply the place for a tyme, till hir maiesty shall resolue farther, for as his profession in the beginning of his lief was to follow the warres, and at his entry into service heere was the firste presidente of that prouince, so hathe his behaiour since this rebellion, deserved well of hir maiesty, And therefore I haue good cause to allow of his nominacion, neuertheles I do not wisshe, that yt should haue long Continuance, because his aucthoritye there must needes be accompanied withe the disliking of therle of ormond, betweene whome there hathe bene some Contrauersies in my tyme And therefore I wishe, that hir maiesty woulde shortely thinke vppon some apt choice of some of hir highnes seruautes in England, and to vse that gentlemans service in some other kinde, And for the present Sir Warham Seintleger, shall haue a comission asosiated withe other of the Colonelles, and Captens, as your Lordships haue well deuised, and his entertainment, assigned with as lytle charg to hir maiesty, as may be, and some smale addicon of horsemen, to his owne retinew already in pay, But that* they should be defalked from other bandes, I do not think conuenient, because yt wilbe hindaunce* to the service, and very offensive to the captens, who if they wante in their companies had rather aunswere the checques to hir maiesty, then to be abridged in their numbers for eny private respecte: /

I am aduertised out of the annalye, that while the Cheife baron, and the attorneye, Were holding a sessions there, Orwark was entered the county of Longford with the number of 1000 of all sortes whereof the most parte Scottes, and begann to burne, and spoile the country, to the rescue whereof the Cheif baron, assembled suche as Could be gotten vppon the soddaine, and Chardged the Scottes, in whiche there was slaine viij. of them, and xx. or thereabouts hurte, notwithstanding they weare not hable to rescue the pray, but there was taken from them 1000 Cattell, and vij. or viij. villages burnte: It seemethe by the letter, and informacion whiche I haue receaued, that there is no grea{t} value* in the offarrolles. or that they did any more then they weare enforced vnto by the Cheif Baron, and the attorneye, who bothe weare in daunger, and more forward, then the rest in the Charge geuen, This your Lordships may see, notwithstanding enny peaces, & composititions, that may be made, how this state is disturbed, withe that nacion of the Scottes, whiche swarme euery where to the annoyance of the Subiectes: /

Lastely I haue humbly to thanke your Lordships for your determinacion to sende hether threasure, municion, and victualls, of which kindes, there is not enny of late aryued, but the threasure is staid at Chester, by a post dispatched yesterday, because I heere that 2. pirates, well appoincted with 140 shott, do remaine in the hauen of Beamorice, redye to make a pray of yt, or of some honest merchautes: If the handmaide do retorne from Loughfoill she shall scowre the coast, and fetche the threasure, But in the meane tyme We liue in want and therefore wishe that yt weare well wafted from Chester.* So hauing not farther, whereof to enfourme your Lordships but that Sir William Standley within thes iij. daies, hathe executed some of the rebelles neere Artlow. whose heddes he sendethe me by water, not yet aryued, & that capten Deeringes company, haue likewise slaine xiiij. in a glan neere Powerscourte, I comytt your Lordships to god. At Dublyn the xijth of August 1581.

Your Lordships most assured
to Commaund,

Arthur Grey

Textual Notes

* **Address]** The removal of the sealed bands has obscured some parts of the address, which was originally written over them.

* **subiectes]** As often, this secretary has here joined a terminal 'es' brevigraph to a word already ending in 'e', in effect writing 'subiectees'. As the intention is clear enough, we have chosen to represent this ambiguous usage in the normal way.

† **that]** Inserted above the line.

† **But that...hinteraunce]** This underscored passage has been flagged in the left margin with a hash mark.

† **value]** A single-character deletion appears at the end of this word.

* **and therefore...Chester]** This underscored passage has been flagged in the left margin with a hash mark.

Annotations

I haue ... from yow] No record of these letters survives. As Grey mentions further on in the present letter, they concerned the Queen's instructions for dealing with Turlough Luineach O'Neill.

after ... Turloughe Lennoughe] Grey had marched to Lifford to confront and parley with Turlough, leaving Dublin just after 19 July. He had returned by 10 August.

my last letters] See Grey to the Privy Council, SP 63/84/13, and Grey to Walsingham, 63/84/14.

praied aide] Requested assistance; the first of several legalisms in the letter.

shifte for him self] Enter into conflicts and negotiations on his own authority; there is an implied threat here, as well as an appeal, for O'Donnell well understood that the Queen and her Deputy had an interest in his allegiance as a counter-weight to the O'Neill.

made hedd into those partes] Journeyed (with force) into Ulster.

Sir Nicholas Malbey] Malby, governor of Connaught. Grey had dispatched him to gather his forces and meet the Lord Deputy at Lifford; he had marched from Athlone at about the same time that Grey had left Dublin.

Tierconnell ... Sligo] See map. Turlough was known to have crossed the Blackwater at Strabane, and was, as Grey reported in a letter of the previous month, killing and spoiling at pleasure in O'Donnell's country west of the river. Grey's plan was for Malby, having marched northwest from Athlone, to gather up O'Donnell and his men in Sligo, and to press on with their united force toward Lifford, where O'Donnell had a castle on his bank – now burned – athwart O'Neill's fortifications at Strabane – also by this point razed. Grey then planned to meet Malby and O'Donnell at the ford at Lifford, effectively

pinching O'Neill and forcing him back into Ulster. In the end, Grey only got as far as the English fort on the Blackwater (near Lough Neagh) before Turlough intercepted him.

Loughfoill] Entering by Lough Foyle in the north (see map), Grey's ships could get the victual and munitions up the river as far as Lifford.

Leefer] Lifford; see map.

the forte vppon the black water] The Blackwater runs northeast from Monaghan into Lough Neagh; the 'new' fort on the Blackwater, completed by the Earl of Essex in 1575 and destroyed during the war with Hugh O'Neill in 1595, was situated a few kilometers northeast of Benburb.

to heere and determine] *Oyer et terminer* is an ancient (Law French) legal expression in common law use, and in the sixteenth century part of the common parlance of the gentry and aristocratic classes.

causes] Matters or issues in contention.

without lycense] Grey's rhetoric emphasised the nominal authority of the Queen in the affairs between O'Neill and O'Donnell.

the rasing . . . Tierconnell side] It was a usual tactic of Irish lords to raze their own castles upon the approach of an English force; the Irish kern with their Scots galloglass were better suited than the English to mobile warfare, and pressed this advantage by destroying the forts and castles which the English might garrison.

Iustice Dowdall, and Mr Briskett] James Dowdall, Justice of the King's Bench since 1565; and Lodowick Bryskett, clerk to the Irish Council and a friend of Spenser's; see biographies.

Mr Threazoror] Sir Henry Wallopp; see biographies.

Mr Marshall] Sir Nicholas Bagenal; see biographies.

the riuer devided vs] Turlough was skittish enough about his safety that he parleyed with Grey across the river.

subscribe to the condicions] When Turlough and his followers were required formally to give their consent to limitations on their activity or power, they balked.

dignety of the state] Grey's chief objective in confronting Turlough on the Blackwater, and in succouring O'Donnell, was this attempt to uphold the crown's dignity – both by honouring its obligation to O'Donnell, and asserting its authority over Turlough.

on bothe sides] I.e. from the west (Malby and O'Donnell) and from the south (Grey).

the proclamacion of generall pardon] For the queen's extension of a general pardon throughout Ireland, see the promulgation in two drafts, one edited in Burghley's hand: SP 63/82/42 and 63/82/43. The order to proclaim the pardon reached Grey on 26 May (see SP 63/83/43), but this was his first chance to proclaim it himself among O'Neill's men.

Turloughes wief] Agnes Campbell, daughter of Archibald Campbell, fourth earl of Argyle; see biographies.

hir maiesties inclinacion] Grey was well aware that Elizabeth's preferred policy in Ireland was a parsimonious conciliation.

the articles ... Turloughes petitions] It is not clear exactly when Turlough Luineach submitted his petition to the Queen, though Captain Piers wrote in January 1581 of his 'requests' (SP 63/80/13); the Queen's answer, contained in letters of 26 and 30 July that do not survive, was overtaken by Grey's journey to Strabane. Grey may well, of course, have received the letters from the Queen before he left, and have chosen to march against Turlough as if he had not, knowing as he did that the Westminster view would never have been viable.

more liberall . . . perswaded] More generous to Turlough than Grey would have condoned.

to yeld anny pledges] Give in any hostages for his good behaviour; Turlough would have considered this a slight to his honour.

falne from the condicions] Broken the provisions of the Queen's offer of peace.

an end . . . from Englande] Given him the impression that he could do what he liked, without repercussion or hope of reward from England.

Capten Peirs] William Piers, a long-serving soldier in the north of Ireland; see biographies. He mentioned his plot in a letter to Walsingham in 1580 (SP 63/75/58), and Grey had been considering it for some time (see SP 63/80/10 and 63/80/32).

vse warely his message] Be cunning and politic in the revealing of his embassy.

his master] Unclear.

the aunswere . . . postilde] Our detailed response to his plan for Ulster, which we have set down point by point.

holpen in his particuler] Furthered in his private affairs.

Creddy] Access or influence.

suff{ic}yent proof] Grey seems to be alluding to some information gathered on his recent journey, perhaps from Turlough himself.

thankeworthye] Meritorious, and deserving of commendation from the Privy Council.

patched stuffe] Temporary dealing, which will not last.

vppon tryall of goddes will] Grey alludes to the ancient legal custom of the ordeal, or trial by battle, where God's will was determined by a sweepstakes hazard of one life against another, in a matter of right.

occonnours] A prominent Irish sept of the southeast.

obirnes] With the Tooles, one of the chief septs of Wicklow.

base brother of . . . of Delvin] Edmund Nugent, base brother to Sir Christopher Nugent, ninth Baron Delvin.

John Zouches] Zouche was the Colonel left as effective governor in Munster after the siege at Smerwick.

Odonnelles sonne] See below.

one Sherif . . . of Limerick] Grey pardoned John Shereff for his fault during his Munster journey in October-November 1581; see SP 63/86/51.

Lord Fitzmorice two sonnes] Patrick and Edmund Fitzmaurice, sons to Thomas Fitzmaurice, sixteenth Lord of Kerry and Baron of Lixnaw.

fosterfathers] 'Fostering' children in other households was a common practice in sixteenth-century Ireland (and not unknown in England); the foster-relations to which this practice gave rise could prove more important and durable than natural kinship.

Concept] Idea.

the countrey] Tirconnell.

the captency] The leadership of the country; 'captain' was the usual English translation of *taoiseach*.

his father Culloughe odonnell] Con's father, the Calough, who was Sir Hugh O'Donnell's brother.

in the time of Shane oneyll] Turlough's predecessor as the O'Neill, who was executed by the McDonnells (a Scottish clan very active in Ireland) in 1567.

placing of Sir Warham Sentleger ... in Mounster] The replacement of Zouche by Sentleger was a point of rank; as Grey points out, rank also has its inconveniences – here, the Earl of Ormond's dislike of Sentleger.

the disliking . . . ormond] The fact that the Earl of Ormond disliked him; on Ormond, see biographies.

a comission . . . Captens] The Privy Council had instructed Grey to appoint Sentleger by means of a commission – a licence within his power – rather than sending out letters of instruction, with a royal warrant, under the Lord Chancellor's seal. This gave Westminster more flexibility in removing Sentleger from office when the time was right.

some smale addicon of horsemen] A few extra mounted soldiers.

defalked from other bandes] Deducted (transferred) from other bands of cavalry.

answere . . . hir maiesty] To answer the check was to comply with instructions on the employment or discharging of servants in the Queen's pay – including soldiers. Grey's point is that it was a matter of honour for the English captains not to have their bands reduced in favour of another captain.

annalye] The county of Longford in Leinster; see map.

Cheife baron, and the attorney] Sir Lucas Dillon and Christopher Fleming, respectively; see biographies.

Orwark] Brian O'Rourke, the O'Rourke; see biographies.

no great{t} . . . offarrolles] Grey's judgment was prescient; though called very dutiful by Sidney in a 1576 account of the Irish septs (SP 63/55/34), the family would come out in rebellion under the Nugents (see SP 63/104/12).

2. pirates . . . 140 shott] Unidentified.

the hauen of Beamorice] See map.

the handmaide] The Queen's only regular ship of war in the Irish Sea, under the command of George Thornton.

Sir William Standley] An English captain, then based in Wexford; see biographies.

Artlow] I.e. Arklow, in southeast Wicklow; see map.

capten Deeringes company] Anthony Deering was stationed with a band of horsemen in Connaught, but had perhaps returned east after the confrontation with Turlough, at which he had certainly assisted.

Powerscourte] The seat of the Toolles or O'Tooles, near Dublin; see map.