

TNA: PRO SP 63/88/15*Grey to Walsingham, 13 January 1581/2*

Early in January 1582, Sir John Fitzgerald, also known as John of Desmond (see biographies) was surprised and killed in the woods of Eatharlach, County Cork, by John Zouche, Governor of Munster; his corpse was hanged over the city gates at Cork, and his head, as this letter describes, sent to Grey in Dublin. Grey takes the opportunity of this letter to Walsingham, in which he recounts these happy events, to remind him of the Dublin government's ongoing financial worries. He had also written to Burghley on 12 January to tell him that 'it hath pleased God too guyue Ihon Zowtche the kyllyng of Ihon of Desmond that Artche rebell & traytor, I hard of it iij dayes past but this nyght I receaued the certayne confirmation therof, & with hym hath taken an oother notorius knaue called Iames Fittz Ihon of Strangalie: the newes I trust wyll not dislyke yowr Lordship' (TNA SP 63/88/12, *supra*). Zouche himself had already advertised his deed to Elizabeth and the Privy Council, informing Burghley on 5 January about the killing of Desmond, 'whos end was according too his actiones, for being demandid off the mistchieues which he had done, he answerid iff he myght haue liued longer he wold haue done more'; Zouche further related the 'great Ioye' in Cork at news of Desmond's death (TNA SP 63/88/7). Zouche also celebrated the event in a dispatch to Walsingham, of the same date, in which he reported that he had written to the Queen, and had 'presented the Ring which I found about the tratour' (TNA SP 63/88/8). The importance of this traffic in corporal proofs should not be underestimated, as it demonstrates the emotional and evidential importance of violent spectacles not only to the Queen, but to the populace whose affections and enormities she and her ministers sought to control. Zouche's (or Grey's?) grim humour ('...for a new-yeeres guyft was commended vntoo mee...') also speaks to the generally desensitized attitude to violence characteristic of Irish politics and military affairs in this period, an important forcing-ground for the sometimes brutal narratives of *The Faerie Queene*.

The text and subscription of this letter are in Grey's cursive italic hand, and the signature is Grey's. The address is written in Spenser's usual secretary hand, and the endorsement in a distinct, later italic. An addressee note in Grey's hand (reading, '{Mr Sec}retary'), slightly obscured by the binding of the ledger in which the manuscript is now kept, appears at the left foot of the recto of the letter.

Address and Endorsement

To the right Hono-
rable my very
good frend Sir
Fraunces Walsingham
Knight Chief
Secretary to her
Maiesty./

13 Ianuary 1581
The Lord Deputye.

Text

I beeseetche yow Sir cawse the letter too my Lords heerwith empacketed too bee considered & awnsswered with all conuenient speede for it emportethe mootche.

This mornyng Ihon of Desmoondes head for a new-yeeres guyft was commended vntoo mee from the Coronell: The newes I iudge allreadie too bee with yow there, hyssellf aduertizing mee that hee had presently dispatched one from Corck therwith, & therefore I leaue too declare the manner of the action: onece the seruyce is woorthy of accounte;* & rewarde in sutche casies & too sutche men is neyther loss nor expence; her Maiestie myght doo well too beestowe on hym all sutche leasies & landes (yet landes I thynck hee had noane) as the traytor had; If it shall not bee trooblesum too yow I praye yow too mooue it. The proclamation guyues 500 ^{li}* for his kylling, but where is the mooney. Consider owre necessities I beeseetche yow* & so the Lord bee euer with yow: Dublin xiiijth of Ianuary 1581.

Yowrs most assuredly
euer,

Arthur Grey

Textual Notes

* *after accounte;*] Three- or four-letter deletion, possibly 'lea' (perhaps the beginning of the word 'leas(i)es': see the following lines).

* **500^h**] Grey seems initially to have written '5000', and then to have deleted the final zero.

* **yow**] Inserted above the line.

Annotations

the letter too my Lords] It is not immediately clear what letter this is, or what its subject was, and no obvious candidates survive among the Irish State Papers, although Grey's description here is certainly oblique. Letters from Grey to Burghley (SP 63/88/12, *supra*) and Grey and the Council to the Queen (SP 63/88/13) survive, both dated 12 January: perhaps a letter to the Privy Council, no longer surviving, was delivered along with them. What is clear, though, is that Grey sees Walsingham as the member of the Privy Council most sympathetic to him, and most willing to see his business expedited.

empacketed] Not packed up in this letter, but enclosed in the same package of letters as this.

it emportethe mootche] It matters a great deal, is of great significance, consequence.

new-yeeres guyft] The giving of expensive gifts at New Year was a sixteenth-century courtly tradition. See Starkey 1991: 126-30.

commended] Given, presented.

the Coronell] John Zouche. In October 1581 he had been made chief colonel and director in Munster (SP 63/86/31), and in November, governor of that province (SP 63/86/49).

proclamation] In fact, Zouche seems to have been granted 1000 pounds for taking the head: 'Mr Zowche the governour of Mounster is here, abowtes his Reckninges, and other affayres of that Province. We allowed him A m^l li mencioned in a proclamacion sent furthe here, for takinge of Sir John of Desmondes heade, besydes other allowaunces' (SP 63/90/62, White to Burghley, 31 March 1582).

owre necessities] Grey's customary plea for money is more urgent than usual: his hardship had been exacerbated by restrictions placed upon money recently sent from England, restrictions which he had flouted. See SP 63/88/2 (*supra*), in which he describes himself as 'compelled by the very force & nature of the present necessities here'.