

TNA: PRO SP 63/76/1

Copy of Sir Nicholas Bagenall to Grey, 2 September 1580

Upon news of the landing of Spanish and papal forces near Dingle, one of Grey's immediate concerns was to determine the extent of Irish support for their arrival. Of particular importance was the greatest and most proximate threat to English interests in the Pale, Turlough Luineach O'Neill, whose potential combination with the invaders and the Munster rebels had the potential to pinch and possibly defeat English forces in the east of the island. Bagenall is hardly being rhetorical in his characterization of the developing military situation as a crucible moment in the history of English interests in Ireland, which may help to explain the savagery of subsequent events, and the jubilation in both Ireland and England after the 'victory' at Smerwick (see SP 63/78/29). On Magennis's quarrel with Turlough Luineach O'Neill, see also SP 63/75/75 (*supra*).

The text of the letter, including the original endorsement at the foot of the second page, is in Spenser's characteristic secretary hand; the only exception comes in the words 'Baron of Dungannon's' in the header, which are in Spenser's italic. The second line of the endorsement, 'To the L Dep.', written in Spenser's compact secretary hand, is the original endorsement. The first and third lines were added in a later italic hand, presumably when the letter was being filed in Westminster.

Endorsement

Sir Nicholas Bagnoll
To the Lord Deputy
2 September

Text

The copie of Sir Nicholas Bagnoles lettre

This very instant my messenger returned from Turlough Lennogh with another of his by whome he sent thinclosed lines which your Lordship may peruse. The partie for whose death he chalengeth Magneisse so hotely of disposicion was so vile as Magneisse could not have in the killing of any such like donne better. A more notorious thief & murtherer reigned not And although he shadow his approche vpon some grownd expressed in his letre yett is he not to be trusted for in hearing of my man he vowed that his Vrraghes he would have before he returned, yf not with your Lordships consent then otherwise His force is iiij^m more neare five & assuredly bent to take thadvantage. for one of the farinans a Rome runner knave came vnto him within these v daies from Mounster & so persuaded him of the forces there & your Lordship in your last voiage how both were

weakened & impaired that hath so kindled his rancor as vnlesse your Lordship speedily send downe force, before he ronne vp, the safetie of the pale wilbe hazarded neuer more: Your Lordships owne presense would here be necessarie yf yt might bee but as you fynd the service most needfull (I speake as one that hath not seene further then here presently) so be yt And yf but the forces come I shall doe what in me shall lye (god please to temper or withstand according to the necessitie of the tyme. I heare he standes the more vpon the Vrraghs, for that Captein Pieres (as he alleadgeth) gave him assuraunce of the enjoyng them your Lordship knoweth yf he had such Commission to performe yt. Lastly as I have said, force & not elles will salue this for truly he dependes of some promise of the baron of Dunganon to come to him. which yf doe then yf force doe not come how uncertein the rest wilbee I know & all men elles may adiudge. Euen thus the living god &c.

To the right Honorable my singular
good Lord the Lord Grey Lord Deputie
of Ireland /

Annotations

Sir Nicholas Bagnoll] I.e. Bagenal; see biographies.

Turlough Lennogh] Turlough Luineach O'Neill; see biographies.

thinclosed lines] This enclosure has not survived.

Magneisse] Sir Hugh Magennis; see biographies.

shadow his approach vpon some grownd] 'Dissemble some false pretext for his approach [to the English Pale]'. Since the letter bearing 'thinclosed lines' is lost, so, unfortunately, is Turlough Luineach's explanation of his advance to the Pale; but it is possible that Turlough Luineach was claiming to seek redress of Magennis' murder of his man.

Vrraghes] i.e. urraghs; see glossary. Turlough Luineach's main complaint against the crown was the Queen's refusal to permit him the O'Neill's traditional Ulster sub-lords: Maguire, O'Cahan, McMahan, Magennis, McQuillin, and O'Hanlon.

farinans] Turlough appears to have had a messenger by the name of Salamon Farnan (or Faranon).

a Rome runner knave] 'Rome runner' was an opprobrious English term, well-attested in the medieval period, for clerics or laymen who travelled to Rome to seek for offices, grants, or other favour from the Pope. O'Neill's servant Farnan may have been this cleric, or they may have been two men of the same family. Bagenal certainly sees Farnan's arrival as a hint that Turlough Luineach may be ready to join an incipient papally supported invasion of the island.

your last voiage] Grey's disastrous August defeat at the hands of Feagh McHugh O'Byrne in the glens of Wicklow; very little correspondence between Dublin and London survives concerning this defeat, which may be because there wasn't much to begin with – Grey certainly would not have wanted to advertise his inauspicious entry into the government. But see SP 63/75/80 and 63/75/82, reports from Chancellor Gerrarde and Sir Nicholas Malby that touch on the defeat.

Captein Pieres] William Piers; see biographies. A letter from Piers to Walsingham (SP 63/75/58) mentions Turlough Luineach's request that his urraghs be maintained, in exchange for expelling the Scots from Ulster. Piers regularly overstepped his commission and caused Grey other headaches throughout his deputyship; see e.g. Grey's impatient dismissal of Piers' self-important claims of 'credytt' with Turlough Luineach in August 1581 (SP 63/85/13).

baron of Donganon] Hugh O'Neill; see biographies.

which yf doe] Presumably Spenser omitted the word 'he' between 'which' and 'yf'; the English feared the combination of Hugh O'Neill and Turlough Luineach, for between them they could muster most of the province of Ulster.