

TNA: PRO SP 63/93/64*Grey to Walsingham, 29 June 1582*

This letter amply illustrates the careful anxiety with which Grey and his administration scrutinized the passage of letters in and out of Ireland. Grey reports to Walsingham about a pair of letters that have been intercepted on their way from England to Ireland (the one of which that has survived, SP 63/93/64/1, is printed *infra*). Thomas Meagh, or Myagh, was a servant of the Earl and Countess of Kildare, and was suspected of involvement in the rebellion of Kildare and Delvin. He is described by Grey, in a letter to Walsingham of 2 March 1580/1, as 'a mealie mouthed fellowe', who should 'bee apprehended, & strayghtly handlyd', in order to obtain 'the secretts of this combination' (SP 63/81/4). 'Extreemitie must wryng it from hym,' Grey goes on; 'by oother dealyng expect nothyng'. Myagh was indeed arrested, and taken to the Tower of London, where he was tortured.

The address and main text of the letter, including the subscription, are in Spenser's characteristic secretary hand. The postscript and signature, and one supralineal correction, are in Grey's distinctive hand. The addressee note ('Secretary walsingham') added to the left foot of the recto of the letter is in Spenser's Italian hand.

Address and Endorsement

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

29 Iune 1582
The Lord Deputy
letteres intercepted.

Text

Sir, having by Chaunce lighted vpon these lettres here inclosed, Coming out of England, I haue thought good to impart them vnto you, to thend yt may appeare, what ill Humoures the already euill disposed state of this countrey draweth from some of those which are there remaying: the one of them being sent from one who is there now kept as close Prisonere, I meane Thomas Meagh, the which for that yt is partly written in some what darke termes and hardly to be construed to the better part, I wish should be examined of him, what is thereby intended: the other Coming from one, who notwithstanding that he walketh there at libertie, yet is very nerely to be touched with treason; by the which you may perceiue what great incoragement & hartening these countrey men gather of the

smallest favour or countenance which is shewed them there,* which though to the better sort may minister occasion of good desert, yett in the ill affected yt nourisheth cancred stomaches with secrete dislikes, and stirreth them vp to disobedience and Contempt of this gouernement. The deeper Consideracion whereof leaving to their Lordships wisdomes, and your self to Almighty god, for the present I hartely take my leave
Dublin the xxixth of Iune. 1582./

Youres euer most assured

Arthur Grey

I pray yow haue mynde of the contents of my last letters that they maye bee awnsswered & esspecyally for my repayre* ouer./

I haue wrytten to my Lord Threasurer of the extremitie that the Munster Garrison is in for want of vittayle & mooney I beeseetche yow sir further the redress or ryd mee of the blame the inconuenience fally{ng}* that ootherwyze can not bee healped./

Textual Notes

* **there,]** Written above the line, in Grey's hand, indicating that he checked over the work of his secretary, at least on this occasion.

* **after repayre]** Two letters deleted, probably 'of'.

* **fally{ng}]** Damage to the edge of the manuscript has cut off the end of this word.

Annotations

these lettres here inclosed] Only the first of these two letters (from Thomas Meagh to his brother) has survived, and is printed below (SP 63/93/64/1).

Humoures] There may be no explicit Galenic metaphor here, and the phrase presumably means 'temperament', 'disposition', though the two meanings are frequently very close in early modern writing.

Thomas Meagh] See biographies. Meagh, or Myagh, had been 'close Prisonere' in the Tower of London since March 1581. A letter from Fenton to Walsingham of 5 November 1581 (SP 63/86/49) asks that he is to have liberty of the Tower, but he was evidently still in custody there.

some what darke termes] Not an uncommon phrase, but resonant with the 'darke conceit' of Spenser's 'A Letter of the Authors ... to Sir Walter Raleigh' (*FQ*). As can be seen from the letter enclosed with this one (SP 63/93/64/1), and from Grey's annotations upon it, the darkness consists of certain obscure comments, and Meagh's indirect reference to certain English captains through the first letters of their surnames.

Coming from one] Unidentifiable; Grey could be referring to the Earl of Kildare or the Baron of Delvin, both of whom had recently arrived in England under the custody of Sir Nicholas Bagenal (see SP 63/93/11). An obligation in £2,000 of 18 June 1583 survives (SP 63/102/91), binding the Earl of Kildare to remain within 20 miles of London, and at least three miles from the court; this kind of arrangement would have given Kildare considerable freedom of movement.

countenance] Favour, patronage, support.

canced stomaches] A cankered stomach was a common sixteenth-century emblem for private malice disguised by seeming friendship.

the contents . . . last letters] Grey has frequently asked to be called home from Ireland. On such requests for revocation, see e.g. SP 63/88/2.

Munster Garrison] George Beverley had been installed as controller of the victuals in Ireland in June 1582, and travelled to England with various messages, including one from Grey to Burghley (SP 63/93/46), claiming that Beverley found the 'order and estate' of the office of victualler 'disordered', and 'the accoumpt so imperfect'. He also bore letters from Geoffrey Fenton to Leicester and Burghley (SP 63/63/58 and 59).

further the redress] Send me money to compensate or make up for this loss.

ryd mee . . . healped] An instance of Latinate syntax, characteristic of Grey's style: 'take away that blame which, if this garrison starves, will surely fall to my name.' Grey is clearly anxious not only for the lives of his soldiers in Munster, but for his reputation as a good general; if his men starve, he wants Walsingham to make it clear to the Queen and the Privy Council that it was for lack of supplies from England, over the dispatch of which he had no control. For an important part of Grey's exchange with Burghley over the victualling, see HH Cecil Papers 11/91 (*supra*).