

LETTER TO KING CHARLES I, 1646.

Lord Montgomery of Ards, of the family of the pluralist bishop of Derry, was taken prisoner in the action [Battle of Benburb], and placed for safe custody, by O'Neill, in Cloughouter. Charles I. wrote to O'Neill soliciting his enlargement. The royal letter presents the striking and instructive picture of the son of a monarch, whose injustice drove into exile and robbed O'Neill's illustrious uncle, suing the victorious general for a small favor, when he himself was on the eve of losing his crown and his life:—

Taken from the book 'The Fate and Fortunes of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Rory O'Donel, Earl of Tyrconnel; Their Flight from Ireland and Death in Exile' by Rev. Charles Patrick Meehan.

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‘May it please your majesty,—I received your highness’ letters of the eighth and twentieth of October, and the tenth of January last ensuing thereof, to set at liberty the lord viscount Montgomery of Ards, who was taken prisoner by my forces in June last. I most humbly beseech your majesty to accept of these my reasons as my apology and excuse for not complying with your majesty’s pleasure herein for the present; for I do and will ever profess to be one of your majesty’s most loyal and obedient subjects, and will, in testimony thereof, be ready upon all occasions to observe your commands. But, dread sovereign, be pleased to understand that the lord viscount Montgomery of Ards hath sided these two years past and more with the parliament rebels of England, in open hostility against your majesty, and especially against this nation of Ireland, and therein hath been more eager and active than any of his party, he being commander-in-chief of all the horse of his party in the province of Ulster here; and for this reason, and for that the party of the Scots who adhere to the parliament against your majesty, hath lately, contrary to the capitulation made between the lord marquis Montrose, on your majesty’s part, and the state of Scotland, most traitorously executed and put to death lieutenant-colonel Anguish Mac Allaster Duffe MacDonnell, and used the like cruel execution, after quarter given, upon lieutenant-colonel O’Cruice, major — Laughlin, major —, and divers other commanders, with many hundred others of inferior sort. And I cannot but represent unto your highness’ memory, how the marquis of Antrim, falling twice into the hands of the Scots as their prisoner, was refused by them to be enlarged, though your majesty, by several gracious letters and messages, earnestly sought the same; likewise the queen of France, who employed a special gentleman of her own purposely about this to the Scots; all which be motives to me not to afford them so great a favor. And I am confident, were your majesty informed of these particulars, and of the proceedings of the Scots, whose language your highness seems now to utter, and you were in that free condition you ought to be, your majesty would never have been drawn to press me into the enlargement of so notorious a rebel, and to forfeit an enemy unto all this nation.

‘So most humbly begging your majesty’s pardon for this my freedom of boldness, and forbearing at present of executing this your royal commands, expressed in these your letters, I, in all humbleness, take leave.—Your majesty’s most humble and obedient servant and subject,

‘OWEN O’NEILL.’