

LETTER TO FATHER LUKE

WADDING, 8th July, 1640.

Taken from '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.

VERY REV. Father, - The letter of your very reverend Paternity reached me yesterday evening, the 7th of this month. I am deeply grieved to learn from it the little foresight our nation has shown in disarming at this particular time, without taking into consideration the evil and loss that may thence come upon them, which, I am certain, will be extirpation, and the total ruin of that poor country, if God, in His divine mercy, through means of some who understand these things, does not put it into their hearts to agree among themselves, and look forward to the great tempest that will surely burst upon them, to deprive them of their property, and reduce the survivors to perpetual slavery, without the hope of ever being able to free themselves, except by a miracle from God, which, I fear, will not be in our day.

I consider very well-timed, and to the purpose, the valiant and noble resolution which your Paternity has taken, to run personal risk in order to see if it be possible to give a helping hand to remedy these things, and the difficulties and dangers that are in them. I trust in God, as this cause is His own, that He will overcome them; and as regards the means for the journey, they shall not be wanting to your Paternity, although I were to sell all my horses. It will be necessary to keep this business a great secret, and let as few as possible know about it, and this even as regards the community, although I respect them all as good and holy men. Because, as all the world knows the high opinion and estimation in which your very reverend Paternity is held throughout these kingdoms, and as you are a public

personage, there is reason to fear that if some persons knew of your being there [in Ireland] at this particular time, they would suppose it to be on some business of importance. It is true that there is great persecution there, but up to the present they have not laid hands on any Irishman. I do not know whether they may not do so before long, but I fear that the imprudent inertness of our countrymen will give them an opportunity of treating them as they please. It certainly would be of much importance if we could meet one another for a while before this journey is undertaken, and [it would be well] if your very reverend Paternity were to write, letting me know the day you intend to arrive at Lille, and give a letter to my wife, to whom I will write, that she forward it to me by an express beforehand, in order that I may arrive there on the same day, if I can; or, if our close position to the enemy does not permit me to go as far [as Lille], that I may appoint the nearest possible place for an interview with your very reverend Paternity. I have always been in the habit of going to lodge at the "Red Knight," at Lille, but I will not go there now, as it is well known to the Irish, all of whom lodge there. I will rather go to the "Three Kings," and await a brief answer from your very reverend Paternity touching these matters. The news from this place is not very good, as we are witnessing a wretched spectacle - the loss of this town - miserably [brought about] by past neglect. The place is so closely besieged, that the enemy has erected two other batteries almost over the very edge of its entrenchments. If reinforcements do not come, I fear it will be lost sooner than is imagined. We are quartered here over a little hill in front of the enemy, a marsh intervening, and our sentinels and those of the enemy are very near one another. With all this, we can give no relief whatever to the poor people who are suffering inside, and we have no other hope than in the duke of Lorraine. One day he is a friend, and

comes; another day he is an enemy, and treats with France. Up to the present nothing is known of his Highness that can be relied upon; but every moment we expect letters from the count Garcia, who has been sent to treat with him. If, however, his Highness were willing to come with the troops he is said to have, and others that he has sent for, not only would the town be delivered, but hope would be entertained of completely routing the enemy. The nephew of your very reverend Paternity has been four or five days with us in La Basse Deule, and has retired to Lille. He may rest assured of my desire to serve him in every possible way, which indeed he does with entire confidence.

An English Jesuit father arrived here yesterday from St. Omer's, and says that they received letters by the last post from England, in which it was stated that the Irish refused to disarm, and that they answered the king and the English parliament, that if they are mad, they [the Irish] do not wish to be so too, and would not lay down their arms until they see their affairs settled to their satisfaction. I do not know whether this be true or not, but the father told it as certain. May our Lord preserve your very reverend Paternity many years, as I desire.

The most affectionate servant of your very reverend Paternity, who kisses your hands,

DON EUGENIO O'NEILL.
From the camp, 8th of July, 1640.