

*July 5, 1644, Oliver Cromwell, before York to his brother-in-law
Col. Valentine Walton*

It's our duty to sympathize in all mercies; that we may praise the Lord together in chastisements or trials, that so we may sorrow together.

Truly England and the Church of God hath had a great favor from the Lord in this great victory given unto us, such as the like never was since this war began. It had all the evidences of an absolute victory obtained by the Lord's blessing upon the godly party principally. We never charged but we routed the enemy. The left wing, which I commanded, being our own horse, saving a few Scots in our rear, beat all the prince's [Rupert's] horse. God made them as stubble to our swords; we charged their regiments of foot with our horse, routed all we charged. The particulars I cannot relate now, but I believe, of twenty thousand the prince hath not four thousand left. Give glory, all the glory, to God.

Sir, God hath taken away your eldest son by a cannon-shot. It brake his leg. We were necessitated to have it cut off, whereof he died.

Sir, you know my trials this way, but the Lord supported me with this: that the Lord took him into the happiness we all pant after and live for. There is your precious child full of glory, to know sin nor sorrow any more. He was a gallant young man, exceeding gracious. God give you His comfort. Before his death he was so full of comfort that to Frank Russell and myself he could not express it, it was so great above his pain. This he said to us. Indeed it was admirable. A little after, he said one thing lay upon his spirit. I asked him what that was. He told me that it was that God had not suffered him to be no more the executioner of His enemies. At his fall, his horse being killed with a bullet, and as I am informed three horses more, I am told he bid them open to the right and left, that he might see the rogues run. Truly, he was exceedingly beloved in the army, of all that knew him. But few knew him, for he was a precious young man, fit for God. You have cause to bless the Lord. He is a glorious saint in Heaven, wherein you ought exceedingly to rejoice. Let this drink up your sorrow; seeing these are not feigned words to comfort you, but the thing is so real and undoubted a truth. You may do all things by the strength of Christ. Seek that, and you shall easily bear your trial. Let this public mercy to the Church of God make you to forget your private sorrow. The Lord be your strength.

7.8 Oliver Cromwell at Dublin to William Lenthall, Esq., Speaker of the Parliament of England (September 17, 1649)¹⁰

Parliament's war against the Irish could not begin in earnest until the wars against the king were over in England. The first Civil War ended in 1646 and the king surrendered, but negotiations for a settlement were still ongoing

¹⁰ *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 2: 125–8.

when a second Civil War broke out in May 1648. It was not until after the trial and execution of the king in January 1649 (see next section) that Cromwell landed with an army in Ireland (August 15), and led his troops in the siege and sack of Drogheda (September 11) and Wexford (October 11). How had the nature of the fighting changed since Edgehill? What was Cromwell's explanation for the Drogheda massacre? Why were priests treated so harshly? Why did it not matter to him that most of the Irish defenders of Drogheda were Old English and not native Irish, the group that had actually risen in October 1641? Should it matter to historians? (Note that, whatever its morality, the violence was effective: towns like Ross soon submitted to terms, and, thus, Ireland submitted to Cromwell and Parliament.)

Your army came before the town [Tredah, Drogheda] upon [September 3], where having pitched, as speedy course was taken as could be to frame our batteries. ... Upon [September 10] ..., the batteries began to play. Whereupon I sent Sir Arthur Ashton, the then governor, a summons to deliver the town to the use of the Parliament of England. To the which I received no satisfactory answer, but proceeded that day to beat down the steeple of the church on the south side of the town, and to beat down a tower not far from the same place. ...

Upon [September 11] ..., about five o'clock in the evening, we began the storm, and after some hot dispute we entered about seven or eight hundred men, the enemy disputing it very stiffly with us. And indeed, through the advantages of the place, and the courage God was pleased to give the defenders, our men were forced to retreat quite out of the breach, not without some considerable loss. ...

Although our men that stormed the breaches were forced to recoil ..., yet, being encouraged to recover their loss, they made a second attempt, wherein God was pleased [so] to animate them that they got ground of the enemy, and by the goodness of God, forced him to quit his entrenchments. And after a very hot dispute ..., they gave ground, and our men became masters both of their retrenchments and the church; which indeed, although they made our entrance the more difficult, yet they proved of excellent use to us, so that the enemy could not now annoy us with their horse. ...

The enemy retreated, diverse of them, into the Mill-Mount: a place very strong and of difficult access, being exceedingly high, having a good graft, and strongly palisadoed. The governor, Sir Arthur Ashton, and diverse considerable officers being there, our men getting up to them, were ordered by me to put them all to the sword. And indeed, being in the heat of action, I forbade them to spare any that were in arms in the town, and, I think, that night they put to the sword about 2,000 men, diverse of the officers and soldiers being fled over the bridge into the other part of the town, where about one hundred of them possessed St. Peter's church-steeple, some the west gate and others a strong

round tower next the gate called St. Sunday's. These being summoned to yield to mercy, refused, whereupon I ordered the steeple of St. Peter's Church to be fired, where one of them was heard to say in the midst of the flames: "God damn me, God confound me; I burn, I burn."

The next day, the other two towers were summoned, in one of which was about six or seven score; but they refused to yield themselves, and we knowing that hunger must compel them, set only good guards to secure them from running away until their stomachs were come down. From one of the said towers, notwithstanding their condition, they killed and wounded some of our men. When they submitted, their officers were knocked on the head, and every tenth man of the soldiers killed, and the rest shipped for the Barbados. The soldiers in the other tower were all spared, as to their lives only, and shipped likewise for the Barbados.

I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood; and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret. The officers and soldiers of this garrison were the flower of all their army, and their great expectation was, that our attempting this place would put fair to ruin us. ...

I believe all their friars were knocked on the head promiscuously but two; the one of which was Father Peter Taaffe, (brother to the Lord [Theobold] Taaffe [earl of Carlingford, d. 1677]), whom the soldiers took the next day and made an end of; the other was taken in the round tower, under the repute of lieutenant, and when he understood that the officers in that tower had no quarter, he confessed he was a friar; but that did not save him. ...

I do not think we lost one hundred men upon the place, though many be wounded.

Constitutional Experiments, Regicide, and Reconfiguration

7.9 *The Heads of the Proposals agreed upon by Sir Thomas Fairfax and the Council of the Army (August 1, 1647)*¹¹

The king lost the first English Civil War, but there was a good chance he could win the peace. First the Scots and the English disputed the settlement, and then the English themselves divided between moderate Parliamentary Presbyterians and more radical Parliamentary Independents and their allies in the army. After the war, the Rump sought to curry favor with the landowning

¹¹ *A Declaration from his Excellency Sr. Thomas Fairfax, And his Councell of Warre* (London, "Aug. 5," 1647), 6–8, 9–10 (mispaginated, B2–v). Dates in quotes are when purchased by the original owner (e.g., George Thomason)