

REFUSAL TO VISIT THE KING

Gerald FitzGerald (1456–1513), Earl of Kildare

to Henry VII (1457–1509), King of England (1485–1509)

Ireland's premier Old English peer, the Earl of Kildare served as Lord Deputy of Ireland during both the York and Tudor dynasties (1477–1494). Kildare frequently refused to follow the orders of Henry VII, and even supported the 1483 rebellion of Lambert Simnel, but the Earl possessed such influence in Ireland that King could not remove him. In 1493, troubling reports reached Henry's ears from Ireland, and he ordered Kildare to London, to which summons the Earl sent the following reply.

Dublin, 5 June 1493

Most excellent Christian King and my most redoubtable sovereign liege lord. In as humble and obeisant manner as any subject can or may do to his sovereign, I recommend me to Your most noble and benign Grace. Pleas'd the same to be assured that I have received your gracious letters missives dated at your manor of Greenwich 28 July past, whereby I have well understand your gracious mind that you would have me to your most noble presence that I might thereby know your gracious mind and that you might have plenary communication with me in all such things as might concern the weal of this, your said land, and that your subjects of the same may be reduced to a good and lawful order and obedience, to the pleasure of God, weal and profit of the same, your land, as in your said letters it appears more at large.

Gracious lord, I, according to your high commandment, was in full mind and purpose to have accomplished and performed your most noble pleasure in the same, setting apart all excuses, till I was desired by your true and faithful subjects of this, your land, and especially my cousins—the Earl of Desmond and Lord Burke of Connaught—that I should not depart, but abide for their defence and to apeace such variance as is depending betwixt the said Earl and Lord Burke, and that they would take on them to write unto Your Highness that Your Grace should take no displeasure with me herein, as it shall appear to Your Grace by their letters and scales more at large. The which I, in my most humble manner beseech Your most benign Grace to accept and repute for mine excuse without any displeasure to be had by Your Highness herein with me, for I am and shall be glad to see Your Highness.

And I beseech humbly Your noble Grace to be my gracious lord, for I am and shall be during my life your true knight, and never shall be proved otherwise. And any other oath or band I have made conveniently for the same may be had, I shall bind me thereto. And over that, if it please Your Highness to send a servant of yours such as shall like you, into this, your said land, I shall cause my said cousin the Earl of Desmond, and all the lords spiritual and temporal of Munster, Lord Burke of Connaught, and all the lords of the same country to be bound as sure and as largely unto Your Grace as I am in presence of your said servant, with diverse others whose ancestors were never bound to any of your progenitors, Kings of England before this time, so that you shall have no cause of mistrust to be had in me.

And God knows what labours and pain I have sustained and daily do sustain to set your said subjects at ease, to my great charge and cost. And by the oath that I have unto Your Highness, there should nothing be to me so great a pleasure as only it might be perfectly understood to Your Grace what I have done for your honor and the weal of your subjects of this, your land.

Most excellent Christian King and my most redoubtable sovereign liege lord, the Blessed Trinity preserve Your most noble Grace to reign most royally, and of your enemies and rebels to have the victory.

James Gairdner, ed. *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII* (London: Longmans, 1861), 1:380–381.
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