

The Fall of Drogheda (September 1649)

Seen by Cromwell

Upon Tuesday, the 10th of this instant, 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 [...]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, the Enemy having both horse and foot, and we only foot, within the Wall,—they gave ground, and our men became masters both of their retrenchments and 'of' the Church [...]

Divers of the Enemy retreated into the Mill-Mount; a place very strong and of difficult access; being exceedingly high, having a good graft, and strongly pallisadoed. The Governor, Sir Arthur Ashton, and divers 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;—divers of the officers and soldiers being fled over the Bridge into the other part of the Town, where about 100 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, when 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 Barbadoes.

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 [...] That which caused your men to storm so courageously, it was the Spirit of God, who gave your men courage [...]and therewith, this happy success. And therefore it is good that God alone have all the glory.

Letter from Cromwell to the Parliament of England, 17 September 1649 in s W. C. Abbott (éd.), *Writings and speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Cambridge, 1939, t. II, p. 125-128.

The unabridged version can be read at: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Cromwell_letter_to_William_Lenthall