

Sir Walter Raleigh (or Raleigh)

1554-1618

For a biography of Raleigh, as well as a discussion of and selections from his other works, see the print anthology, pp. 1110-36.

EDITION: *A report of the truth of the fight about the Iles of Açores* ... London: Printed [by John Windet] for William Ponsonby, 1591. STC 20651.



[*The Last Fight of the Revenge*]

Raleigh's first piece of printed prose, "The Last Fight of the *Revenge*" (as the piece is popularly called) appeared anonymously in the same year as the battle: 1591. Hakluyt's reprint in his 1599 *Principal Navigations* (vol. 2, part 2, pp. 169-76) attributed the account to Raleigh, and was apparently derived from Raleigh's manuscript since it differs somewhat from the earlier published account (D.B. Quinn, ed., *The Hakluyt Handbook*, vol. 2 [London, 1974], p. 425). The battle—sometimes called part of the Azores Expedition—and Raleigh's account of it have been held up as displaying the best national qualities of the English. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) called the battle "memorable ... even beyond credit, and to the height of some heroical fable. And though it were a defeat, yet it exceeded a victory." For John Evelyn (1620-1706) the battle evoked simply the comment, "Than this what have we more! What can be greater!" (Prefatory matter, *The Last Fight of the Revenge* [London, 1908]). These comments suggest that this work was a highly successful piece of national and personal propaganda, and indeed like *The Discovery of Guiana* (1596) indicate Raleigh's deftness in rewriting national and personal losses as victories. Here, Raleigh uses the occasion of the defeat of the *Revenge* to promote a vision of Englishness that would have still resonated in World War II England, characterized by love of monarch and country, devotion to duty up to and including death, and adherence to the Protestant faith.

The commander of the *Revenge* was Sir Richard Grenville (1542-91), soldier and naval commander, Raleigh's cousin and a collaborator in his New World explorations. In 1585, he commanded the seven ships which Raleigh had outfitted for his first attempt at the

colonization of Virginia. Grenville's qualities as a leader had already been testified to by his ingenious outwitting and capture of the Spanish ship which attacked him on his homeward journey. On his second journey homeward from Virginia in 1586, he himself attacked the Spanish Azores, looting the towns and taking many Spaniards captive. In 1591, under the command of Admiral Lord Thomas Howard (1561-1626), first earl of Suffolk, a fleet of ships (six of the Queen's, six victuallers from London, the bark *Raleigh*, and two or three pinnaces) sailed for the Azores to loot Spanish treasure ships. Grenville was vice-admiral (second-in-command), and his warship the *Revenge* had been previously used by Sir Francis Drake against the Spanish Armada (A.L. Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville of the Revenge* [London, 1937; rept., 1963], pp. 305-06; and J.K., "Sir Richard Grenville," *DNB*, pp. 565-66).

Grenville refused to follow Howard when the admiral retreated before a much larger Spanish contingent, instead engaging the Spanish with tragic results. The reasons for his refusal remain unclear, but contemporary writers attributed it variously to the relative situation of Howard's ship and the *Revenge*, which did not allow Grenville to perceive the true nature of his danger until it was too late; a breakdown in inter-ship communications, such that Grenville either did not know or did not believe that the ships sailing towards him were a fleet of Spanish warships, thinking that they were instead the treasure ships the English fleet had been awaiting; Grenville's refusal to abandon his sick men who were presently on shore (Raleigh's opinion); and Grenville's character which would not allow him to retreat ignominiously, and instead led him to try and cut his way through the Spanish fleet. Modern writers have also suggested that Grenville was cut off from the rest

of the fleet because of his position in the rear, protecting the English fleet's retreat ("Azores Expedition," *Hist. Dict. of the Elizabethan World*, p. 20), or that he simply "lagged behind" (E.L. Furdel, "Grenville, Sir Richard," *Hist. Dict. of the British Empire*, vol. 1, pp. 484-85). Whatever the reason, the *Revenge's* delay led to its being surrounded by the Spanish. Grenville refused to back down and the *Revenge* was captured after a prolonged and fierce resistance, one that was very costly to the Spaniards as well as the English in lives and ships.

from *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of Azores,¹ This Last Summer. Betwixt the Revenge, One of Her Majesty's Ships, and an Armada of the King of Spain.*

[...]

After the *Revenge* was entangled with this *Philip*, four others boarded her; two on her larboard, and two on her starboard.² The fight thus beginning at three of the clock in the afternoon continued very terrible all that evening. But the great *San Philip*, having received the lower tire³ of the *Revenge*, discharged with cross-bar shot,⁴ shifted herself with all diligence from her sides, utterly misliking her first entertainment. Some say that the ship foundered, but we cannot report it for truth, unless we were assured. The Spanish ships were filled with companies of soldiers: in some two hundred besides the mariners; in some five, in others eight hundred. In ours there were none at all, beside the

15 mariners, but the servants of the commanders and some few voluntary gentlemen only. After many interchanged volleys of great ordinance and small shot,⁵ the Spaniards deliberated to enter⁶ the *Revenge*, and made divers⁷ attempts, hoping to force her by the multitudes of their armed soldiers and musketeers,⁸ but were still repulsed again and again, and at all times beaten back into their own ships or into the seas. In the beginning of the fight, the *George Noble* of London,⁹ having received some shot through her by the armada, fell under the lee of the *Revenge*,¹⁰ and asked Sir Richard what he would command him, being but one of the victuallers and of small force. Sir Richard bid him save himself, and leave him to his fortune. After the fight had thus without intermission continued while the day lasted and some hours of the night, many of our men were slain and hurt, and one of the great galleons of the armada and the admiral of the hulks both sunk,¹¹ and in many other of the Spanish ships great slaughter was made. Some write that Sir Richard was very dangerously hurt almost in the beginning of the fight, and lay speechless for a time ere he recovered. But two of the *Revenge's* own company,

¹ *the Isles of Azores* the Spanish Azores, "a group of nine islands in the North Atlantic Ocean, about 800 miles due W of the coast of Portugal" (*Topographical Dict.*, p. 40). After the Spanish had seized the islands from Portugal in 1580, they had become a crucial stop-over point for Spanish treasure ships from the Americas, and, as a result, a favourite target for English privateers ("Azores," *Hist. Dict. of the Elizabethan World*, pp. 19-20).

² *two on her larboard, and two on her starboard* i.e., there were two ships on either side of the *Revenge*.

³ *received the lower tire* i.e., they were assaulted with the simultaneous discharge of all the guns (cannon) on the lower level.

⁴ *cross-bar shot* a cannon ball with a bar projecting on each side of it.

⁵ *volleys of great ordinance and small shot* simultaneous discharge or salvo of large mounted cannons and muskets; thus, of cannon balls and small lead bullets.

⁶ *deliberated to enter* resolved to board.

⁷ *divers* several.

⁸ *musketeers* soldiers armed with muskets, an early type of rifle or hand-gun.

⁹ The *George Noble* was one of six victuallers—ships employed to carry provisions for Howard's fleet—and thus it was a small, poorly armed, and sparsely manned vessel (one "of small force") not meant for combat of any kind (Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville*, p. 308).

¹⁰ *fell under the lee of the Revenge* i.e., took up a position on the sheltered side of the *Revenge*.

¹¹ *one of the great galleons of the armada and the admiral of the hulks both sunk* "The [Spanish] galleon *Ascension* and [Don Luis] Cuitiño's ship, the flagship of the hulks [large ships or frigates], were so badly damaged by each other and by the *Revenge* that both went to the bottom" (Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville*, p. 310). The *Ascension* and Cuitiño's ship damaged each other in their attempts to draw near enough to board the *Revenge* (Rowse, pp. 308-09). While the *Ascension* sunk that very night, Cuitiño's ship remained afloat until the following day; most of their men were saved (Rowse, p. 310).

40 brought home in a ship of Lyme¹ from the
islands, examined by some of the lords and others,
affirmed that he was never so wounded as that he
forsook the upper deck, till an hour before mid-
45 night; and then being shot into the body with a
musket as he was a-dressing,² was again shot into
the head, and withal his surgeon wounded to
death. This agreeth also with an examination taken
50 by Sir Francis Godolphin³ of four other mariners
of the same ship being returned, which examina-
tion the said Sir Francis sent unto Master William
Killigrew,⁴ of her Majesty's privy chamber.

But to return to the fight, the Spanish ships
which attempted to board the *Revenge*, as they were
wounded and beaten off, so always others came in
55 their places, she having never less than two mighty
galleons by her sides and aboard her. So that ere
the morning, from three of the clock the day
before, there had fifteen several armados⁵ assailed
her; and all so ill-approved their entertainment as
60 they were by the break of day far more willing to
harken to a composition⁶ than hastily to make any
more assaults or entries. But as the day increased,

¹ *Lyme* perhaps Lyme Regis, a port town in Dorset or Lynn Regis (King's Lynn), a port town in Norfolk about 96 miles N of London (*Topographical Dict.*, p. 325).

² *a-dressing* Given the presence of his surgeon, perhaps his wounds were being dressed, as opposed to Grenville simply preparing himself for the rest of the battle.

³ *Sir Francis Godolphin* (c. 1534-1608), a prominent member of the gentry in Cornwall, who held a number of important offices (justice of the peace, sheriff, and receiver-general for the Duchy of Cornwall, among others); he was also leese and captain of the Scilly Islands—"a group of islands belonging to the British Crown, lying at the entrance to the English Channel, about 25 miles W of Land's End" (*Topographical Dict.*, p. 454)—the protection of which was his responsibility during the continued Spanish threat of the 1580s and 1590s; he repulsed a Spanish attack on the islands in 1595 (*DNB: Missing Persons*, ed. C.S. Nicholls, Oxford, 1993, p. 257). He had worked with Grenville in 1580, raising men for service in Ireland and securing supplies for the English troops already there (Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville*, pp. 160-61).

⁴ *Master William Killigrew* Sir William Killigrew (d. 1622), MP for Helston, Cornwall (1572), the Queen's groom of the chamber and one of her "life-long servant[s]" (Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville*, p. 78).

⁵ *several armados* separate war ships.

⁶ *composition* a truce (although the word also means specifically, "terms of surrender").

so our men decreased; and as the light grew more
and more, by so much more grew our discomforts.
65 For none appeared in sight but enemies, saving
one small ship called the *Pilgrim*, commanded by
Jacob Whiddon,⁷ who hovered all night to see the
success;⁸ but in the morning, bearing with the
Revenge, was hunted like a hare amongst many raven-
70 enous hounds, but escaped.

All the powder of the *Revenge* to the last barrel
was now spent, all her pikes broken, forty of her
best men slain, and the most part of the rest hurt.
In the beginning of the fight she had but one
55 hundred free from sickness, and fourscore and
ten⁹ sick, laid in hold upon the ballast:¹⁰ a small
troop to man such a ship, and a weak garrison to
resist so mighty an army. By those hundred all was
sustained: the volleys, boardings, and enterings of
80 fifteen ships of war, besides those which beat her
at large.¹¹ On the contrary, the Spanish were
always supplied with soldiers brought from every
squadron—all manner of arms and powder at will.
Unto ours there remained no comfort at all, no
85 hope, no supply either of ships, men, or weapons;
the masts all beaten overboard, all her tackle¹² cut
asunder, her upper work¹³ altogether razed, and in
effect evened she was with the water; but the very
foundation or bottom of a ship, nothing being left
90 overhead either for flight or defence. Sir Richard
finding himself in this distress, and unable any

⁷ *Jacob Whiddon* Sea-captain and one of Raleigh's trusted servants, Whiddon (d. 1595) had accompanied Grenville to Virginia in 1585; he was also entrusted by Raleigh with a preliminary fact-gathering mission to Guiana in 1594, and he accompanied Raleigh to Guiana in 1595, dying on the return voyage. Under the command of Charles Howard, lord high admiral, he had in 1588 already encountered the Spanish at sea, during the attack of the Spanish Armada, taking charge of Raleigh's ship the *Roebuck* (J.K.L., "Jacob Whiddon," *DNB*, pp. 4-5). See print anthology, p. 1126, note 4.

⁸ *success* outcome, result.

⁹ *fourscore and ten* ninety.

¹⁰ *laid in hold upon the ballast* i.e., they were lying in the hold on the heavy material placed there in order to keep the ship from capsizing when in motion.

¹¹ *beat her at large* assaulted her freely.

¹² *tackle* rigging.

¹³ *upper work* that part of a vessel which is above water level when it is ready or laden for a voyage.

longer to make resistance—having endured in this fifteen hours’ fight the assault of fifteen several armados, all by turns aboard him, and by estimation eight hundred shot of great artillery, besides many assaults and entries; and that himself and the ship must needs be possessed by the enemy, who were now all cast in a ring round about him, the *Revenge* not able to move one way or other but as she was moved with the waves and billow of the sea—commanded the master gunner, whom he knew to be a most resolute man, to split and sink the ship, that thereby nothing might remain of glory or victory to the Spaniards (seeing in so many hours’ fight and with so great a navy they were not able to take her, having had fifteen hours’ time, fifteen thousand men, and fifty-three sail of men of war to perform it withal¹), and persuaded the company, or as many as he could induce, to yield themselves unto God, and to the mercy of none else, but as they had, like valiant resolute men, repulsed so many enemies, they should not now shorten the honour of their nation by prolonging their own lives for a few hours or a few days. The master gunner readily condescended and divers others; but the captain and the master² were of another opinion, and besought Sir Richard to have care of them: alleging that the Spaniard would be as ready to entertain a composition,³ as they were willing to offer the same; and that there being divers sufficient and valiant men yet living, and whose wounds were not mortal, they might do their country and prince acceptable service hereafter; and that where Sir Richard had

125 alleged that the Spaniards should never glory to have taken one ship of her Majesty’s, seeing they had so long and so notably defended themselves, they answered: that the ship had six foot water in hold, three shot underwater which were so weakly stopped⁴ as with the first working of the sea she must needs sink, and was besides so crushed and bruised as she could never be removed out of the place.⁵

130 And as the matter was thus in dispute, and Sir Richard refusing to hearken to any of those reasons, the master of the *Revenge* (while the captain won unto him the greater party) was convoyed aboard the general Don Alfonso Bassan;⁶ who finding none overhasty to enter the *Revenge* again, doubting⁷ lest Sir Richard would have blown them up and himself, and perceiving by the report of the master of the *Revenge* his dangerous disposition, yielded⁸ that all their lives should be saved, the company sent for England, and the better sort to pay such reasonable ransom as their estate would bear, and in the mean season⁹ to be free from galley or imprisonment. To this he so much the rather condescended, as well as I have said, for fear of further loss and mischief to themselves, as also for the desire he had to recover¹⁰ Sir Richard Grenville, whom for his notable valour he seemed greatly to honour and admire.¹¹

⁴ *three shot ... weakly stopped* i.e., three holes under water which were so poorly plugged or patched.

⁵ The pamphlet notes, later, however, that the *Revenge* was indeed escorted towards Spain after Grenville’s death; however, it sank in a storm that struck the homeward-sailing Spanish convoy.

⁶ *the general Don Alfonso Bassan* the ship of the general Don Alonso de Bazan, experienced Spanish commander, influential in the overhauling of the Spanish navy. He had already been engaged in battling the English in their earlier attempts to seize Spanish treasure ships in the Azores (Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville*, pp. 289-94). He was heavily criticized later for not having taken more of Howard’s ships (Rowse, p. 315).

⁷ *doubting* fearing.

⁸ *yielded* i.e., granted in the terms of surrender.

⁹ *mean season* meanwhile, meantime.

¹⁰ *recover* rescue, deliver.

¹¹ Grenville’s Spanish and English contemporaries differed in their views concerning Grenville’s character and thus the nature of his resistance: was he a man of passionate and violent temper, arrogant, rash, and unwilling to follow the orders of his superiors when they

¹ *having had fifteen hours’ time ... to perform it withal* The DNB suggests that there is some exaggeration here, since “of the fifty-three Spanish ships a large proportion were victuallers intended for the relief of the Indian [i.e., Spanish treasure] ships. Not more than twenty were ships of war, and of these not more than fifteen were engaged with the *Revenge*.” Raleigh, in fact, earlier correctly records the number of attacking Spanish vessels. Here, however, he has tripled the number of Spaniards who assaulted the ship—from five thousand to fifteen thousand (“Sir Richard Grenville,” p. 567). Cf. Rowse, though, who puts the number of Spaniards at 7,000 (*Sir Richard Grenville*, p. 300).

² *the captain* the individual responsible for the day-to-day operations of the vessel, under the command of Grenville; *master* the navigator.

³ *to entertain a composition* to consider the terms of a surrender.

When this answer was returned, and that safety
of life was promised, the common sort being now
155 at the end of their peril, the most drew back from
Sir Richard and the master gunner, being no hard
matter to dissuade men from death to life. The
master gunner, finding himself and Sir Richard
160 thus prevented and mastered by the greater
number, would have slain himself with a sword
had he not been by force withheld and locked into
his cabin. Then the general sent many boats
aboard the *Revenge*, and divers of our men, fearing
165 Sir Richard's disposition, stole away aboard the
general and other ships. Sir Richard, thus over-
matched, was sent unto by Alfonso Bassan to
remove out of the *Revenge*, the ship being marvel-
lous unsavoury, filled with blood and bodies of
170 Richard answered that he might do with his body
what he list,¹ for he esteemed it not, and as he was
carried out of the ship he swooned,² and reviving
himself again desired the company to pray for
175 him. The general used Sir Richard with all human-
ity, and left nothing unattempted that tended to
his recovery, highly commending his valour and
worthiness, and greatly bewailed the danger
wherein he was, being unto them a rare spectacle,
180 and a resolution seldom approved,³ to see one
ship turn toward so many enemies, to endure the
charge and boarding of so many huge armados,
and to resist and repel the assaults and entries of
so many soldiers. All which, and more, is con-
firmed by a Spanish captain of the same Armada.

[...]

conflicted with his notions of personal honour? or was he the exem-
plar of English honour, courage, devotion to duty, and love of his
sovereign? While the original *DNB* article provides a critical portrait
of Grenville, A.L. Rowse's 1937 biography *Sir Richard Grenville*, comes
down largely on Raleigh's side, interpreting Grenville's "intemperate
ardor for action" as that of a "hero" (pp. 335-36). The Spanish
described Grenville as a "great corsair" held in much respect by the
English (Rowse, p. 303).

¹ *list* wished.

² *swooned* fainted, lost consciousness.

³ *approved* demonstrated, exhibited.

185 Sir *Richard* died, as it is said, the second or third
day aboard the general, and was by them greatly
bewailed. What became of his body, whether it
were buried in the sea or on the land, we know
not. The comfort that remaineth to his friends is,
190 that he hath ended his life honourably in respect
of the reputation won to his nation and country,
and of the same to his posterity, and that being
dead he hath not outlived his own honour.⁴

For the rest of her Majesty's ships that entered
195 not so far into the fight as the *Revenge*, the reasons
and causes were these. There were of them but six
in all, whereof two but small ships, the *Revenge*
engaged past recovery; the island of Flores was on
the one side, fifty-three sail of the Spanish,
200 divided into squadrons, on the other, as all full
filled with soldiers as they could contain. Almost
the one half of our men sick and not able to serve;
the ships grown foul, unroomaged,⁵ and scarcely
able to bear any sail for want of ballast, having
205 been six months at the sea before. If all the rest
had entered, all had been lost, for the very huge-
ness of the Spanish fleet, if no other violence had
been offered, would have crushed them between
them into shivers; of which the dishonour and
210 loss to the Queen had been far greater than the
spoil or harm that the enemy could any way have
received. Notwithstanding, it is very true that the

⁴ *Sir Richard died ... honour* J.H. van Linschoten, a Dutch merchant,
was present in the Azores at the time of the fight, and his 1596
account [published in English translation, 1598] includes what are
purportedly Grenville's last words: "Feeling the hour of death to
approach, he spoke these words in Spanish, and said: 'Here die I
Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind, for that I have ended
my life as a true soldier ought to do, that hath fought for his country,
Queen, religion and honor, whereby my soul most joyful departeth
out of this body, and shall always leave behind it an everlasting fame
of a valiant and true soldier that hath done his duty, as he was bound
to do. But the others of my company have done as traitors and dogs,
for which they shall be reproached all their lives and leave a shame-
ful name forever'" (quoted in Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville*, p. 315).
Rowse notes that the last sentence of this speech was deleted in its
English translation, and that the speech may be accurate in its general
drift but not in its exact wording (p. 315). For the entire text of van
Linschoten's account (along with Raleigh's account and a celebratory
poem by Gervase Markham [1595]), see E. Arber, ed. *The Last Fight
of 'The Revenge' At Sea*, English Reprints Series (Westminster, 1901).

⁵ *unroomaged* unrummaged: disordered, chaotic.

Lord Thomas would have entered between the squadrons, but the rest would not condescend; and the master of his own ship offered to leap into the sea rather than to conduct that her Majesty's ship and the rest to be a prey to the enemy, where there was no hope nor possibility either of defence or victory. Which also in my opinion had ill-sorted or answered the discretion and trust of a general, to commit himself and his charge to an assured destruction without hope or any likelihood of prevailing, thereby to diminish the strength of her Majesty's navy, and to enrich the pride and glory of the enemy.¹

[...]

[B]y the Spaniard's own confession, there are 10,000 cast away in this storm, besides those that are perished between the islands and the main. Thus it hath pleased God to fight for us, and to defend the justice of our cause, against the ambitious and bloody pretences² of the Spaniard, who seeking to devour all nations, are themselves devoured—a manifest testimony how unjust and displeasing their attempts are in the sight of God, who hath pleased to witness by the success of their affairs his dislike of their bloody and injurious designs, purposed and practiced against all Christian princes, over whom they seek unlawful and ungodly rule and empery.

One day or two before this wreck happened to the Spanish fleet, whenas³ some of our prisoners

¹ Although according to Rowse, the official Spanish account of the battle of the Azores represents Howard as "an inexperienced man and not a sailor" (*Sir Richard Grenville*, p. 303), his naval service suggests either that the Spanish evaluation was inaccurate or that Howard was a very quick study. His service against the Spanish Armada in 1588 saw him knighted for his extreme valour by Charles Howard, lord high admiral, and soon after being knighted he was given command of a man-of-war; in 1596 he was admiral of the third squadron in the fleet sent against Cadiz, rewarded on his return by being made a knight of the Garter; in 1597 and 1598, he was vice-admiral of another fleet bound for the Azores (G.G., "Lord Thomas Howard," *DNB*, p.71). Later in his career, he held many important offices, both under Elizabeth and James I.

² *pretences* aims, intentions, designs.

³ *whenas* when.

desired to be set on shore upon the islands, hoping to be from thence transported into England, which liberty was formerly by the general promised, one Maurice Fitz John, son of old John of Desmond a notable traitor, cousin german to the late earl of Desmond,⁴ was sent to the English from ship to ship to persuade them to serve the King of Spain. The arguments he used to induce them were these: the increase of pay which he promised to be trebled; advancement to the better sort; and the exercise of the true Catholic religion, and safety of their souls to all. For the first, even the beggarly and unnatural behaviour of those English and Irish rebels that served the King in that present action was sufficient to answer that first argument of rich pay. For so poor and beggarly they were, as for want of apparel they stripped their poor countrymen prisoners out of their ragged garments, worn to nothing by six months service, and spared not to despoil them even of their bloody shirts from their wounded bodies, and the very shoes from their feet—notable testimony of their rich entertainment and great wages. The second reason was hope of advancement, if they served well and would continue faithful to the King. But what man can be so blockishly ignorant ever to expect place or honour from a foreign king, having no other argument or persuasion than his own disloyalty; to be unnatural to his own country that bred him; to his parents that begot him, and rebellious to his true prince, to whose obedience he is bound by oath, by nature, and by religion? No, they are only assured to be employed in all desperate enterprises, to be held in scorn and disdain ever among

⁴ *Maurice Fitz John ... late earl of Desmond* The exact identity of this member of the Desmond family, an important and wealthy Irish clan who led an intermittent, ten-year rebellion against the occupying English, remains somewhat obscure. The Desmonds (particularly under the leadership of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald [d. 1579, after landing with a Spanish-Papal force in Ireland]) had shown a willingness to ally themselves with England's continental enemies, in particular Spain and the Papacy. Thus, Maurice Fitzjohn's presence on a Spanish vessel and his attempt to suborn the captured English mariners is not improbable. On Sir John of Desmond, see p. 7, note 2; *cousin german* first cousin.

those whom they serve. And that ever traitor was
 either trusted or advanced I could never yet read,
 neither can I at this time remember any example.
 280 And no man could have less become the place
 of an orator for such a purpose than this Maurice
 of Desmond. For the earl, his cousin, being one of
 the greatest subjects in that kingdom of Ireland,
 having almost whole countries in his possession;
 285 so many goodly manors, castles, and lordships; the
 Count Palatine of Kerry, five hundred gentlemen
 of his own name and family to follow him, besides
 others (all which he possessed in peace for three
 or four hundred years) was, in less than three years
 290 after his adhering to the Spaniards and rebellion,
 beaten from all his holds, not so many as ten gen-
 tlemen of his name left living, himself taken and
 beheaded by a soldier of his own nation, and his
 land given by a parliament to her Majesty, and pos-
 295 sessed by the English;¹ his other cousin Sir John of
 Desmond² taken by Master John Zouch, and his
 body hanged over the gates of his native city to be
 devoured by ravens; the third brother, Sir James,³
 300 hanged, drawn, and quartered in the same place. If
 he had withal vaunted of this success of his own
 house, no doubt the argument would have moved

much and wrought great effect; which because he
 for that present forgot, I thought it good to
 remember in his behalf. For matter of religion, it
 would require a particular volume if I should set
 down how irreligiously they cover their greedy and
 ambitious pretences with that veil of piety. For
 sure I am that there is no kingdom or common-
 wealth in all Europe but if they be reformed,⁴ they
 then invade it for religion sake; if it be, as they
 term, “Catholic,”⁵ they pretend title, as if the kings
 of Castile⁶ were the natural heirs of all the world.
 And so between both, no kingdom is unsought.
 Where they dare not with their own forces to
 invade, they basely entertain the traitors and
 vagabonds of all nations; seeking by those and by
 their runagate Jesuits⁷ to win parts, and have by
 that mean ruined many noble houses and others in
 this land, and have extinguished both their lives
 and families. What good, honour, or fortune ever
 man yet by them achieved is yet unheard of or
 unwritten. And if our English papists⁸ do but look
 into Portugal, against whom they have no pre-
 tence of religion, how the nobility are put to
 death, imprisoned, their rich men made a prey, and
 all sorts of people captured;⁹ they shall find that
 the obedience even of the Turk is easy and a
 liberty in respect of the slavery and tyranny of
 Spain. What they have done in Sicily, in Naples,
 Milan, and in the Low Countries—who hath there

¹ *For the earl, his cousin ... possessed by the English* Raleigh offers an accurate account of the consequences of Gerald Fitzgerald, fifteenth earl of Desmond's revolt against the English. After vacillating for some time, he joined his two brothers (see Sir John and Sir James, below) in a rebellion against the English in 1579. In 1583, the earl, by this time reduced to the status of a hunted fugitive with barely a handful of followers, was pursued by the kin of a local Irishman from whom the earl's men had stolen cattle. The earl was first wounded and then beheaded by an Irish soldier, Daniel O'Kelly. The earl's head was subsequently sent to London and set upon a pike on London Bridge, the traditional fate of traitors. In 1586, an act of Parliament declared his estates forfeited to the crown (R.O., “Gerald Fitzgerald, fifteenth earl of Desmond,” *DNB*, pp. 121-22).

² *Sir John of Desmond* One of Gerald Fitzgerald's two brothers, John was attacked by a troop of men under the command of Captain John Zouch in 1581; during the melee John was fatally wounded. His dead body was, nevertheless, taken to the Irish city of Cork, where it was hanged in chains over the city gate for three or four years; later, its head was finally cut off, sent to Dublin, and displayed on the castle walls (“Sir John of Desmond” in “Gerald Fitzgerald,” *DNB*, p. 123).

³ *Sir James* In 1580, James was likewise captured by the English; he was taken to Cork, hanged, quartered, and his head put on a spike over one of the city gates.

⁴ *reformed* i.e., of the reformed religion: Protestant.

⁵ *as they term, “Catholic”* Raleigh objects to Roman Catholic Spain's appropriation of the word “Catholic” to refer to their religion, since in its basic sense the word means “universal.”

⁶ *Castile* Spain.

⁷ *runagate* vagabond, wandering; *Jesuits* members of a Roman Catholic order, established in 1534, whose main aim was to support the Roman Church in its struggles with the sixteenth-century Reformers and to spread the faith among non-Christians. They were hated and feared by Protestants, in particular, and were (in England, at any rate) viewed as supporting anti-Protestant and pro-Catholic factions that sought to overthrow the government.

⁸ *papists* i.e., Roman Catholics.

⁹ *do but look into Portugal ... all sorts of people captured* i.e., the Spanish can't use the Portuguese's religion as a pretence for invasion or domination, since Portugal was already a Catholic nation. Philip II of Spain invaded and conquered Portugal in 1580.

been spared for religion at all?¹ And it cometh to my remembrance of a certain burgher of Antwerp, whose house being entered by a company of Spanish soldiers, when they first
 335 sacked the city, he besought them to spare him and his goods, being a good Catholic and one of their own party and faction. The Spaniards answered, that they knew him to be of a good conscience for himself, but his money, plate, jewels, and goods
 340 were all heretical, and therefore good prize. So they abused and tormented the foolish Fleming, who hoped that an *Agnus Dei*² had been a sufficient target³ against all force of that holy and charitable nation. Neither have they at any time as they
 345 protest invaded the kingdoms of the Indies and Peru, and elsewhere, but only led thereunto, rather to reduce the people to Christianity than for either gold or empery; whenas⁴ in one only island called Hispaniola⁵ they have wasted⁶ 30,000 of the

350 natural people, besides many millions else in other places of the Indies—a poor and harmless people created of God, and might have been won to his knowledge, as many of them were, and almost as many as ever were persuaded thereunto. The story whereof is at large written by a bishop of their own nation called Bartholome de las Casas, and translated into English and many other languages, entitled *The Spanish Cruelties*.⁷ Who would therefore repose trust in such a nation of ravenous
 355 strangers,⁸ and especially in those Spaniards, which more greedily thirst after English blood than after the lives of any other people of Europe for the many overthrows and dishonours they have received at our hands, whose weakness we have discovered to the world, and whose forces at home, abroad, in Europe, in India, by sea and land, we have even with handfuls of men and ships overthrown and dishonoured. Let not, therefore, any Englishman of what religion soever have other opinion of the Spaniards, but that those whom he seeketh to win of our nation he esteemeth base and traitorous, unworthy persons, or inconstant fools; and that he useth his pretence of religion for no other purpose but to bewitch us
 370 from the obedience of our natural prince, thereby hoping in time to bring us to slavery and subjection; and then none shall be unto them so odious and disdained as the traitors themselves, who have sold their country to a stranger, and forsaken their faith and obedience contrary to nature or religion; and contrary to that humane and general honour, not only of Christians, but of heathen and irreligious nations, who have always sustained what labour soever, and embraced even death itself, for

¹ in Sicily, in Naples, Milan, and in the Low Countries ... hath there been spared for religion at all? Spain had added these Italian city states to its growing European possessions in 1468, 1504, and 1535, respectively. When Philip II's father, Charles V, abdicated the throne in 1556, Philip became king of Spain, Naples, Sicily, and the Netherlands. Through marriage alliances and war, the Low Countries (the Netherlands) along with Burgundy had already come under Spanish control. Philip II's oppressive rule triggered the revolt of the northern Dutch Protestants against Catholic Spain, in a war for political independence and religious freedom which continued intermittently from 1566 to 1609 ("Charles V [1500-1558]," *Hist. Dict. Elizabethan World*, pp. 62-63). Raleigh's anecdote following refers specifically to the sacking of Antwerp in 1576 by unpaid Spanish troops; according to some reports over 8,000 inhabitants of the city died over a period of three days (J.A. Wagner, "Netherlands Revolt," *Hist. Dict. Elizabethan World*, p. 208). Antwerp was at the time predominately Catholic, since it was part of the largely Catholic southern provinces of the Low Countries (roughly equivalent to modern-day Belgium and Luxembourg).

² *Agnus Dei* "Lamb of God," a prayer said in the Roman Catholic mass during the consecration of the Eucharist ("Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Grant us peace.")

³ target shield.

⁴ *whenas* whereas (in contradiction to their assertion).

⁵ *one only* one single; *Hispaniola* the name derives from Columbus's term for the Caribbean island that today comprises the Dominican Republic and Haiti: *La Isla Española* (the Spanish Island). See "Hispaniola," *Hist. Dict. Spanish Empire* p. 309.

⁶ *wasted* devastated, ravished, ruined.

⁷ Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566) was a soldier who took part in the Spanish conquest of Cuba, but later he became a Dominican friar, his religious vows at least partly motivated by his witnessing of the Spaniards' brutal treatment of the Indians in the Caribbean. His first work, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552), described the abuses he witnessed in graphic detail, and it was quickly translated into German, French, Latin, and Flemish; its 1583 English translation, *The Spanish Colony [Spanish cruelties and tyrannies, perpetuated in the West Indies, commonly termed The new found world]* was often used to condemn Spanish imperial practices.

⁸ *strangers* foreigners.

385 their country, prince, or commonwealth. To con-
clude, it hath ever to this day pleased God to
prosper and defend her Majesty, to break the pur-
poses of malicious enemies, of foresworn traitors,
and of unjust practises and invasions. She hath
390 ever been honoured of the worthiest kings, served
by faithful subjects, and shall by the favour of
God, resist, repel, and confound all whatsoever

attempts against her sacred person or kingdom. In
the meantime, let the Spaniard and traitor vaunt¹
395 of their success; and we, her true and obedient
vassals, guided by the shining light of her virtues,
shall always love her, serve her, and obey her to
the end of our lives.

—1591

¹ *vaunt* boast.