

## *The Campaign of Aughrim.*

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IF the Irish troops had not done wonders (“*fait des merveilles*”) under French generals in Savoy, it is very dubious if Louis would have sent another man or another franc to Ireland after the return of his own troops. In the first period of revulsion after the Boyne, French opinion had taken a very unfavourable view of the Irish nation, and Madame de Sévigné, whose Jacobite enthusiasm soon waned, gave expression to it in a sentence, declaring that “the Irish were poor creatures and traitors.” But a little further experience sufficed to expose the injustice of this view and to bring out the truth, which was that Irishmen could not command victory when the conditions were impossible any more than Englishmen or Frenchmen could ; and there can never be any doubt that the conditions under which the Irish fought at the Boyne were as nearly hopeless as they well could be.

When the Duke of Tyrconnell arrived, then, in France, he found Louis prepared to risk a little more, if not very much, in the Irish venture. No French Minister would sanction the despatch of any more French troops, and the relief at having recovered so many of those sent did not admit of any fresh strain. But apart from an army, France could still do a good deal to assist the Irish, and Tyrconnell asked in the first place only for stores, arms, and money. He also asked for the services of a good general, and of some staff officers to aid him. Of Irish regimental officers and of men he represented that there were more than enough, although he does not seem to have made his calculations with sufficient care, for the Irish forces had been reduced by the defection of that curious adventurer, Baldearg O’Donnell, who had taken off to the wilds of Sligo 7000 of the Rapparees or irregulars, and there held a bedraggled Court of his own as if he and not James were the Irish King. His chief grievance seems to have been that the Duke of Tyrconnell had been given the title which appertained to his family. It is not surprising to find in Berwick’s Memoirs expressions of surprise and disgust at the endless quarrels and divisions of Irish parties. Nor had proper allowance been made for the 4000 men captured at Cork. Tyrconnell had not taken these matters into adequate account when he declared that there was a sufficiency of fighting-men in Ireland.

But perhaps it was discreet not to ask the French King for what he was indisposed to grant, and an arrangement was come to for very generous supplies to be sent early in the new year, Tyrconnell was sent back to reanimate the Jacobite cause by bearing himself the news that French succours were to follow after him.

If the condition of the Irish troops had been bad when Tyrconnell sailed from Ireland it was naturally much worse when he got back three months later. The officers were in rags, the soldiers “miserably naked,” and the sum of money he brought with him was soon dispensed in doles to relieve so much misery. At the same time all the base money was called in, and commissioners were appointed to take a list of the amounts and the holders, so that they should be indemnified whenever the King came by his own again. To men in such need the French aid seemed long in coming, and when it came inadequate ; although it was not ungenerous of its kind, and there seems no justification for the complaints, which occupy so large a space of James’s Memoirs, at the hostility of Louvois to his cause. Louvois had to look after French, not Jacobite, interests, and he was a hard bargainer. When he fitted out the expedition of March, 1691, he stipulated that Tyrconnell should return 500 Irish recruits to raise the Mountcashell Brigade to its full war strength.

The general selected to take the command of the Irish army was Charles Chalmot, Marquis de St. Rhue (commonly but erroneously called in English literature St. Ruth). To a certain extent he seems to have put himself forward to secure the command, for he had extolled the valour of the Irish troops under him in Savoy, and as he was extremely popular with the Mountcashell Brigade it was assumed that he must be just the man to get on with the troops in Ireland. He was essentially a fighting general, but he had served with the cautious Catinat, and had acquired some of that great commander's skill as a tactician. Berwick says that he "was by nature very vain," but even if the remark be not merely ill-natured, as many of Berwick's were, vanity was no reflection on his military skill.

In St. Ruth, as we suppose we must call him, France sent one of the best officers at her disposal. He was immeasurably superior as a soldier to either Roze or Lauzun. He was accompanied by the Marquis d'Usson and the Chevalier de Tessé as Lieutenant-Generals, both of whom had seen much service in the French wars. Colonel La Tour was selected to fill the post of Governor of Limerick, but the only French officers beyond these who sailed for Ireland in 1691 were the few artillerymen who had accompanied Tyrconnell some weeks earlier. But some civilians were sent to look after the money and the stores (among these was material for 20,000 tunics in grey or mouse-coloured cloth) sent from France, and these officials wrote some very interesting and informing reports on the state of Ireland, which have yet to be published. Adverse gales delayed St. Ruth's departure, and it was not until the commencement of May that the Chevalier de Nesmond, commanding the escorting squadron of thirty-two large ships, conceived it would be safe to make a start. More care had to be taken in these matters than previously, as it was no longer merely the straight course to the south of Ireland that had to be accomplished, but the dangerous Kerry-coast had to be rounded in order to reach the Shannon. At last the winds seemed propitious, after the squadron had first been driven from Brest to Belle-Isle, and about the 20th of the month St. Ruth made his formal entry into Limerick. The difficulty of communication may be gathered from the fact that although Nesmond's orders were to return without delay, he was unable to get out of the Shannon until the middle of July — in fact, only a few days before Aughrim.

St. Ruth brought with him a good supply of arms, clothes for several regiments, a large quantity of powder and ball, and a considerable amount of oats, meal, and biscuit, as well as of wine and brandy, in all of which there had been a great deficiency if not absolute dearth in Ireland. Thus for a brief space there was plenty in the land, and the long-starving troops were put into good heart for the fierce ordeal that lay before them. When St. Ruth reviewed the troops with which he was to carry on the war he was very pleased with the appearance of the infantry, which he found nearly 20,000 strong, and with the exception of a few regiments lately raised to replace those captured at Cork, they consisted of seasoned troops. The cavalry was numerically weak, although excellent in its way, but there were no means of raising more horse regiments, and the gaps made at the Boyne had never been refilled. It was an army well suited for the defence of the river line formed by the Shannon, bridged only at Athlone, Banagher, and Limerick itself. But in order to make it as efficient as possible the less trained regiments were put to garrison Limerick and Galway.

In June D'Usson reviewed fifteen battalions at Killaloe, and reported the men as good, their discipline imperfect, and their arms showing a deficiency of at least 100 per battalion. The Intendant Fumeron fixes the total strength of the Irish army at 25,000 infantry, 3000 cavalry, and 2500 dragoons. The greatest defect in the force was that there were no horses to draw the artillery, and it was added that these had been allowed to perish by neglect during the previous winter. The French reports, as a rule, bring in a statement to the effect that "the misery of the people is beyond belief."

In the meantime Ginkel had been largely reinforced from England, and recruits were sent across the Channel in hundreds and thousands with the view of being trained on the spot.

In several of his letters, written in French and preserved at the Record Office, he complains that they required a great deal of training, and that he feared the enemy would be ready to take the field sooner than himself. Although Ginkel's infantry was not quite as numerous as the Irish his cavalry force was four times as strong, and he also possessed a numerous and powerful artillery both for the field and for attacking walled places. Thanks to St. Ruth's delayed arrival Ginkel was able to take the field first, and he then marched straight for Athlone, capturing on the way the castle of Ballymore and its garrison of 500 men. Plunkett writes : —

“ By the beginning of June the English army was assembled at Mullingar, and on the 6th of the same month they began their march towards Athlone, with intention to take that great pass into Connaught. On the 7th they came to the village of Ballymore, about half-way between Mullingar and Athlone. There is a fort close by it at the side of a lough, which was a little fortified by the Irish the last winter. Lieut. Colonel Miles Bourke was now Governor thereof, in which there were about 500 soldiers. Ginkel, resolving not to leave this untaken, sent a summons that same day to the Governor, who refused to comply on good terms ; at which the general ordered a few pieces to batter the fort, which was brought down to the ground, so that the next day, the 8th of June, the garrison was forced to surrender at discretion. They were sent prisoners to Dublin, and thence all the private men were transported to the island of Lambay. There were found in this little hold only two diminutive pieces of cannon.”

Fumeron is less complimentary to the defenders of Ballymore. He states that “ no resistance was offered, although there were 800 fusillers and one month's supplies in the place.” Considering Ginkel's overwhelming force it would be more just to regard this affair as another instance of the Irish frittering away their chances. The 500 men placed in Ballymore could only have been put there for the purpose of being lost.

At this supreme moment when everything called for union in the Irish camp the cabal broke out again against Tyrconnell. St. Ruth had pitched his camp about two miles south of Athlone, in which he placed an excellent garrison commanded by Colonel Nicholas Fitzgerald, and General d'Usson was also appointed to direct the defence with his superior knowledge. The Duke of Tyrconnell, anxious to take part in the fray that was approaching, accompanied the army, and pitched his camp with it. He was not a military genius, as his critics constantly remind us, but he was a brave man, and no skulker despite his age and his weight. He also had his views, and sometimes, at least, they were reasonable and judicious. Such was the case with regard to Athlone. The previous year when Athlone had been successfully defended by Colonel Richard Grace, a strong entrenchment had been erected on the southern side of the town, that is to say, on the side now facing St. Ruth's camp. The Duke proposed that this should be levelled as contributing in no way to the defence, and as only serving as an obstacle to the sending of reinforcements into the place. His advice was rejected and gave his opponents the chance of declaring that he was interfering in military matters of which he knew nothing.

Having gained this first success his detractors decided to humiliate him still further, and some of the Irish Colonels sent him a formal notice that unless he quitted the camp they would cut the cords of his tents. As the Duke had the sympathies of the larger half of the army he undoubtedly exercised great self-restraint in complying, but he said that he would do nothing to divide the army on the eve of what promised to be the decisive battle of the long war. He mounted his horse and, accompanied by his personal retinue, rode back to Limerick ; but if his advice had been taken with regard to the removal of the obstructing entrenchment Athlone need not have fallen, or rather it could have been easily recovered on June 30 (O.S.). In these matters St. Ruth, as he had no local knowledge and could not speak English, had

largely to depend on the guidance of his Irish subordinates. While Henry Luttrell and Purcell were bitterly opposed to Tyrconnell (no doubt they guessed that like Berwick he had advised James to have them treated as Mountjoy was), other Irish commanders resented his old favouritism for the Hamiltons. But perhaps the greatest cause of confusion which led to clashing and divided counsels was St. Ruth's ignorance of English, and the little knowledge most of the Irish officers had of French.

Such was the prelude to the attack on Athlone, which may be told in Plunkett's words : —

“ The English army marched to Athlone, which was invested on June 19 on the Leinster side. This part of the town was for the most part burned the last year by the Irish : yet at the present they had in it three or four companies of foot. On the 20th General Ginkel battered it for his first attempt. In the afternoon he made an attack and gained it ; a few men were killed on both sides.

“ This part of the town being theirs, they raised batteries the next day against the other part that is on Connaught side. It is destitute of walls and only defended by a castle and the river, over which there runs a stone bridge into the town, the governor whereof was Colonel Nicholas FitzGerald, with a garrison of fifteen hundred men, choice grenadiers and foot. Lieutenant-General D'Usson put himself into it also. On the 22nd the whole side of the castle was beaten down so that it became unserviceable to the besieged. In a day or two after, what small works were about the castle became so far demolished that there remained no cover to the defendants except a little behind the said castle.

“ This work being over, the next attempt of the besiegers was how to get possession of the bridge in order to attack the town therefrom. The dispute was exceedingly fiery, but the English gained all the arches but the last, which had been broken by the Irish. However, they carried on their endeavours so far the next day that they laid beams thereon and planked part of the beams ; yet the same day a detachment of the Irish with a surpassing audacity threw down beams and planks, notwithstanding the most terrible fire of the enemy. The next day the besiegers renewed the attempt by the help of fascines ; but it proved in vain, for the besieged burned them all. . . .

“ In this perplexity Major-General Talmash principally, and seconded by the Duke of Wirtemberg and others, advised attempting to get into the town through the river by a sort of ford near the bridge. This resolution was no sooner taken than a deserter traversed the river above the town and came to the Irish camp, letting the generals know that the enemy would attack the town through the ford the next day. No notice was taken of this warning, it being judged a thing impracticable. On this very day the Irish garrison, which had behaved themselves to admiration during the five previous days and while the fury of the siege lasted, was relieved, and in their place three regiments of foot were sent, two of which, viz.. Colonel O'Gara's and Colonel Anthony MacMahon's, were raised but the winter before and had been on no service. They were consequently most unfit to be put upon the defence of a place threatened with assault the next day by a daring army. Along with this relief came Major-General Maxwell for better managing the defence.

“ The 30th June (O.S.) a deserter or two from the Irish camp swam the river to the English very early in the morning, and told them that the Irish felt secure and that the garrison consisted of but three ordinary regiments. Ginkel commanded two thousand men to make ready under the command of Major-General Mackay, distributing some money among the men as a cordial. At six in the morning Captain Sandys and two lieutenants led through the ford up to the armpits sixty grenadiers in armour, twenty abreast, followed by a great body of foot. The garrison fired at them and the English army fired in amongst the garrison with great and small shot. But amidst this furious storm the adventurers gained the bank

through a breach, and casting before them their grenades which bursting made frightful effect among the raw soldiers not used to such squibs.

“ Some of the ingressors ran immediately to the end of the bridge and helped their companions on the other side to lay beams and planks on the broken arch ; others went to assist the laying of the bridge of boats, by which the English passed into the town so fast that in half an hour all the town was their own, the garrison being forced to yield to numbers and better soldiers, and to retreat to their army. Thus the place was lost against all expectation. Here was nothing but a concatenation of errors in all the enterprises of the loyalists, no antecedent experience rendering them wiser. Of the Irish a few were slain, amongst whom were Colonel MacElligott and Colonel Richard Grace of Courtown ; and Major-General Maxwell was made prisoner.”

The Huguenot officer Dumont de Bostaquet did not serve during this campaign, but as he got his information from some of his brother officers, his brief descriptions of the fights at Athlone and Aughrim may be introduced for purposes of comparison. His information as to the over-confidence among the Irish leaders in the security of Athlone probably gives the true explanation of the misfortune : —

“ The enemy having burnt down our work to restore the bridge thought themselves quite safe, and St. Ruth and the other generals gave themselves up to amusement not thinking that our troops could do anything for several days ; but General Ginkel, having discovered a ford, caused a strong body of infantry to cross the river and then sent over cavalry to support them, so that the enemy had to abandon this part of the town. The troops who came to their help from the camp were driven back to it in confusion.”

The several accounts in the French records bear out, generally speaking, these statements. The defence of East Athlone is described as having been good, and General Wauchope is given the credit of it. It is declared that the enemy lost 500 good troops and the Irish no more than 200. In connection with this fight it is also noted that the Irish officers are improving and that the men are taking more care of their arms. With regard to the capture of Athlone itself, it is declared that the enemy were so quick in crossing the ford that the reinforcements could not get up in time, and that D’Usson, hurrying up with them, was knocked down and trampled on.

The capture of Athlone, with the best crossing over the Shannon, was a serious blow to the Irish cause, and paved the way to its final collapse. It seems probable that St. Ruth had not sufficient knowledge of the country to perceive all the importance of the position until it had been lost, and there must have been some neglect on the part of his Irish lieutenants in not impressing upon him the vital need to hold Athlone at all cost. There and not at Aughrim should the French general have made his stand.

Having lost Athlone St. Ruth felt bound to retreat, retiring down the river towards Limerick. Tyrconnell strongly urged him to return to Limerick, to refrain from coming to a general action, and to prolong the war till the following year, by which time Louis might be in a position to send troops and further aid. But for the moment no one would listen to Tyrconnell. Besides, St. Ruth was very much piqued at the loss of Athlone, for which he was inclined to blame D’Usson, who was not at his post when the final attack was made. D’Usson also was against risking everything on a pitched battle, and was sent off to Galway. St. Ruth took the view that his military honour made it imperative that he should risk a pitched battle, so he slowly retreated, looking out carefully for a favourable spot on which to make his stand. He found it near the small town and castle of Aughrim or Kilconnell.

The battle of Aughrim, unlike that of the Boyne, was a real trial of strength between the two opposing armies, and both sides could look back on the affair without having to blush for themselves or their commanders. It is always held by Irishmen that the day was won when St. Ruth was killed, and although Berwick states in his Memoirs that he did not believe Aughrim would have been a victory, he was not there, and this opinion of his, at least, is not entitled to much weight. Our other authority, the Huguenot officer, Dumont de Bostaquet, also was not present, but in his account of the battle he assigns the credit of the victory to the final charge of Ruvigny and the French Protestant cavalry.

Let us commence our account of the battle with Plunkett's narrative : —

“ He (St. Ruth) marched towards Limerick until he came a little beyond the village of Aughrim, where viewing the ground he judged it convenient for his design, and so fixed there his camp in waiting for the enemy. Before his front he had a morass, over which foot could come but not horse. At each end of this morass there was a passage through which the enemy's horse could come to his right and left flank. That on the right was a little ford caused by a stream issuing from the morass. That on the left was an old broken causeway, only large enough for two horses to pass at a time and was sixty yards long. Beyond this causeway was the castle of Aughrim, into which St. Ruth put on that day Colonel Walter Bourk and two hundred men.

“ He marshalled his army in two lines. The cavalry on his right were the regiments of the Duke of Tyrconnell, of the Earl of Abercorn, of Colonel Edmund Prendergast (previously that of Sutherland), besides dragoons. This wing was to see that the enemy's horse did not break in on the right of the wing through the pass of the ford and through the narrow ground lying between two morasses after passing the ford ; for the English had double the number in cavalry, though the Irish had some advantage in the infantry. 'Twas here Lieutenant-General de Tessé and Major-General Sarsfield, now Earl of Lucan, were posted. On the left St. Ruth placed the Earl of Lucan's regiment of horse, and those of Colonel Henry Luttrell, of Colonel John Parker, and Colonel Nicholas Purcell with a body of dragoons. The Lord of Galmoye with his regiment was put behind the second line of the foot in the nature of a reserve to answer occasions. The conduct of this left wing was given to Major-General Sheldon, the first line of which Brigadier Henry Luttrell commanded. Their business was to defend the pass of the causeway, near to which, for more security, there were set two regiments of foot.

“ Close before the first line of the Irish infantry there were a few old ditches which were serviceable to them at the first charge of the enemy. The management of the infantry was assigned to Major-General Dorington and to Major-General John Hamilton.

“ No doubt St. Ruth showed good skill in choosing his ground, and in ranging his host for this fight where his all and the all of the nation lay at stake. The day before the combat he pronounced some words wherein he manifested his desire that all men would withdraw and reserve themselves for garrisons who were sickly or unable to fight as they should do.

“ On July 11 the English army came to Ballinasloe, three miles from Aughrim. The next day being Sunday it arrived at Aughrim a little after six in the morning, where, having rested a little while, the whole army was drawn up in two lines of battle. The Irish were at that juncture assisting at the sacrifice of Mass, and a little after prepared for meridian repast ; but General St. Ruth, observing the enemy arranging in order for fighting, commanded his men to be marshalled according as we have mentioned.

“ Both sides being fully prepared, action began a little after eleven, which mostly consisted in the playing of the artillery and in skirmishes for gaining and defending some ad-

vanced posts and little passes towards the right of the Irish. The English were first repulsed and afterwards acquired those outward places. Both parties, to give them their due, contended with extraordinary valour, insomuch that their combat was comely amidst death and wounds because fought with military skill.

“ But General Ginkel, not satisfied with the obtention of these little advanced posts, resolved to come closer to the matter and make himself master of the ford on the right of the enemy that he might get in that way with his cavalry amongst the Irish foot, which he perceived was somewhat superior, at least upon account of the ground, and which he seemed to fear most that day. Upon this he ordered down at two o’clock a great body of horse from his left to attack the pass of the ford. Here the dispute was such wherein the English were first repulsed until the Earl of Portland’s regiment of horse joined them, and thereby they pushed the Irish from the ford to the body of their cavalry which was hard by, where they stood firm their ground all the day in spite of several attempts made on them, because the English horse, even after passing the ford, could not spread being enclosed on the right and left by the said morasses.

“ General Ginkel did not like, hitherto, the countenance of the contention, because he saw no way to weaken the Irish infantry with his horse if he should generally engage. This consideration put him in a doubt whether he should continue and come to a close fight that day. But it was soon resolved that it was so best. Whereupon he commands his left wing to charge again violently the right of the Irish horse through the ford at five in the afternoon, which they did with great bravery, and as well they were resisted. Between these wings the conflict was fierce. But at the end the English were forced to recoil, not being able to compass their aim.

“ ’Twas at this period of the action and about six o’clock the main bodies of foot on both sides came to close fight, and sharp it was. The English charged, and in their advancing the Irish slew numbers from their little old ditches ; the English gained them and flew in boldly among the enemies. The Irish returned the charge and broke and pursued them with much slaughter. Fresh bodies of English came on again and held the strife a good while in balance. General Dorington being herein pressed sent for the two regiments of foot which were placed in the beginning of the day to guard the pass on the left. At the same time General Ginkel ordered down four fresh regiments of foot to reinforce his combatants, which made the contention very sanguinary till at last the English gave ground and the Irish advanced near the enemy’s field of battle.

“ This repulse was no sooner given than a grand corps comes pouring down on the Irish for the third time. ’Twas now the combat seemed more violent than before and as it were the last effort. After an obstinate storm the English were constrained to retreat. The Irish followed, making use of club musket whereby the foreigners suffered much. The regiment of Guards and the whole royal brigade were particularly noted by the field to have performed uncommon execution. The Irish pursued so far that they gained the enemy’s ground and maintained themselves thereon. Colonel Gordon O’Neil with his regiment took some of their cannon.

“ At this General Ginkel, seeing his centre wholly broken, his left wing to have had no small losses without being able to gain their point, that his right wing could not with any safety get over to the left of the Irish, and that the foe was on his field of battle, he became so disturbed in his thought that he could not well resolve what to do unless to take his flight, of which some marks appeared immediately. “ On the other side General St. Ruth remarking the condition of the enemy and his own success cried out in his language with joy, ‘ Le jour est à nous, mes enfants !’ (‘ the day is ours, my boys !’).

“ Amidst that confusion of General Ginkel some of his great officers advised him for his last remedium to attempt once the sending his right wing of horse over the pass of Aughrim castle, notwithstanding the danger thereof. The general took this desperate advice and so ordered it to be executed ; upon which the cavalry marched, Ruvigny’s regiment being the first.

“ The Marquis of St. Ruth observing the enemy coming towards the pass, he gave orders to the left wing of his horse that had been idle all the day to go and oppose him, which he knew was easily done and therefore he continued his joy as being sure of his point. Here we are to take notice that this long bloody contention is just a-ending, that the victory is so certainly in the hands of the Irish that nothing can take it away but the gaining of that most perilous pass by the castle of Aughrim ; that the defending of it is so easy that a regiment may perform the task. At least four regiments of horse and four of dragoons might make the passage impossible. . . . What excuse can the left of the King’s cavalry make for themselves if they will not hinder the enemies gaining the said pass ? They have had all the day conspicuous examples of bravery before their eyes. . . .

“ St. Ruth, having sent his command to the horse to march and oppose the enemy at the pass, must himself needs go along to see them perform this duty that there may be no failure in the last scene of this bloody tragedy. They march and the General followed with his guards. But as he was riding down a little hill a cannon ball from the other side directed by the cannoneer amongst the troops that were going to defend the pass struck him in the head, at which he fell and at the same time it laid the nation prostrate at his feet. As soon as the body was down one of the retinue carried it off, and brought the corpse to the town of Loughreagh and there interred it privately.

“ His death was immediately made known by a deserter to the enemy, who thereupon advanced in haste to the pass. ... As soon as St. Ruth was slain the guards withdrew from the field. Brigadier Henry Luttrell, who was at the pass with the advanced troops, hearing of it did the like after a small resistance given to the first arrived enemies. Major-General Sheldon with the main body of the left wing followed, making their way to Loughreagh and thence to Limerick. At the same time the Irish infantry went on thundering and their cavalry on the right stood firm to their ground, being prepared at every moment to encounter bravely as they had done several times that day, little dreaming that their horse on the left would abandon them. . . . The commanding officers of the left wing by abandoning their station without compulsion, nay without a stroke, were either traitors to their King and country, or by exposing their foot to certain murder they showed a barbarous indifference for the safety of their friends and countrymen, or in fine were notorious cowards.

“ But to proceed. By the time the King’s horse went off the field the enemy’s whole right wing arrived at the pass, and seeing no opposition beyond they confidently went through notwithstanding the fire from the castle on the right, which fire was insignificant for it slew but a few in the passage. The reason of it was given because the men had French pieces, the bore of which was small and had English ball which was too large — a new miscarriage through heedlessness as bad as treachery.

“ As soon as the hostile cavalry was got over they immediately enveloped the Irish foot, who were surprised at their hard fate while they were mowing the field of honour. They had no other remedy for their preservation than to retreat as fast as they could, making their way to Portumna and so forward to Limerick. Most of the horse on their right made off likewise. Only the Earl of Lucan with some troops thereof and the Lord of Galmoye with his regiment did good service in covering their retreat as prosperously as so small a body could do. This and the arriving night and some morasses brought them off indifferently well. ’Twas their officers respectively that suffered most. In the same evening late the castle of Aughrim was

taken, and the commander Colonel Walter Bourk with his major, eleven officers and forty men were made prisoners. Thus you have seen a victory snatched out of the hands of the victorious.”

The account of the battle given by James in his Memoirs may now be quoted as supplementing that of Plunkett. It was probably based on Dominic Sheldon’s report supplied later, and does not materially differ from the Irish version. While seeking to explain how it was that “the extream good” cavalry did not charge and left the infantry in the lurch, the truth is not hidden that they “thought of nothing but saving themselves.” There is also no reason for the disparagement of the Irish infantry. St. Ruth had under him some newly raised regiments and he was naturally anxious to accustom them to standing under fire, but the bulk of the foot consisted of the troops who had held the breach of Limerick, and there was no reason to be nervous about them. King James was also a little mixed as to the wings. It was the left not the right wing of the Irish army that was forced by the passage of Ruvigny’s squadrons over the causeway and bog, and the right wing kept the enemy at bay throughout the whole of the day and did something to cover the retreat of the infantry while the left simply galloped away. Here King James speaks : —

“ St. Ruth being a little piqued at the late disgrace, resolved to wait for the enemy at Acrim which he found an advantageous post, so encamped himself there in two lines upon a rising ground with a bog before him on which there was but two passes, the one at the old Castle of Acrim on the left of the foot, the other about three hundred yards advanced from the right, and because he put his greatest trust in the horse drew the right wing of horse of the first line in rear of the right of the first line of foot. On Sunday July 12 the enemy advanced with their foot in columns to the bog side, while their horse took a great round to flank the right ; they had no positive design to come to a general action, but to try the countenance of the King’s army, and to drive them if possible from that post with their cannon, but being once engaged and encouraged by their former successes soon brought it to a decisive point. On the other hand, the Irish considering this was like to prove the last effort for re-establishing the King’s authority and securing the estates and liberties of an oppressed people, expected them with great constancy, and convinced the English troops they had to do with men no less resolute than themselves ; so that never was assault made with greater fury or sustained with greater obstinacy especially by the foot, who not only maintained their posts and defended the hedges with great valour, but repulsed the enemy several times particularly in the centre and took some prisoners of distinction ; in so much that they looked upon the victory as in a manner certain, and St. Ruth was in a transport of joy to see the foot, of which he had so mean an opinion, behave themselves so well and performe action worthy of a better fate.

“ But it seems in the beginning of the day St. Ruth (perceiving that the enemy who outnumbered him stretched out their left so far that he feared being flanked) ordered the second line of the left to march to the right ; but he who was to execute that order caused a battalion of the first line to file off with the rest supposing the bog in the front would prevent the enemies advancing, but they who stood in awe of that battalion while it faced them took courage when it was gone, and by the help of hurdles made a shift to get over the bog, and at the same time four squadrons of the enemies horse passing a causey began to forme themselves on the other side of the defile. As soon as the General was informed of the fault that had been made he ordered all the cavalry to march, putting himself at the head of it, which being extream good would soon have dispersed those few squadrons of the enemy, who as yet were but a forming, when by a cannon shot he was unfortunately killed just as he was saying to those about him : ‘ They are beaten, let us beat them to the purpose.’ This accident caused a great confusion, and tho’ endeavours were made to conceal his death, yet the first squadron of the Life Guards, who was next him, stopping upon it, the rest did the same and occasioned great delay, which the enemy took care to profit by, and passing in the interim a

considerable body of horse through the defiles attacked and broke both the lines of the Irish foot, the horse advancing not in time to their assistance; but instead of that giving all for lost thought of nothing but saving themselves, and so gave an entire victory to the English.

“ The night, indeed, coming on prevented the pursute. However, the Irish lost near four thousand men, nor was that of the English much inferior.”

Dumont gives the whole credit of the victory to Ruvigny and his regiment :

“ The battle of Aghrim was obstinately contested, and the victory hung for some time in the balance. But M. de Ruvigny and his regiment fought so well that the contest turned in our favour. The enemy’s cavalry fled and abandoned the infantry which suffered heavily. Only the intervention of night saved it from being cut to pieces.”

The reports of the French officers on the battle have never been published. Here are some summaries of them.

Fumeron writes : “ The battle began at 1 o’clock and continued till 8. The Irish fought well and would have won the day but for St. Ruth’s death and Tessé’s being wounded when no general was left.” Fumeron concludes by asking for 7000 muskets to arm the troops in Limerick.

Tessé, despite his wound, wrote a little later : “ The battle lasted from 11 to 7. Every attack was repulsed all along the line till at last the enemy’s horse got over the causeway. The change in the conduct of the troops after St. Ruth’s death was simply extraordinary.” Finally Colonel La Tour wrote : “ Ireland is not lost for this defeat if only arms and supplies are sent. There are plenty of men.”

The details of a battle fought so long ago and ending in a scene of confusion are not clearly discoverable, and it would be almost idle to attempt to follow them. But it is not difficult to imagine what really occurred on the left wing. When the fight in the centre was at its height, Dorington, it will be remembered, withdrew the two foot regiments which had been assisting Sheldon’s cavalry in guarding the causeway. That weakened the left wing materially. After the fight in the centre had gone in favour of the Irish, they advanced and took possession of some of the ground of their opponents. This forward movement not merely took the infantry further away from the left, but rendered it less easy to see what was happening there. It seems perfectly clear that the English, or rather the Huguenot cavalry, on traversing the causeway got in the rear of the centre, while the three cavalry regiments on the right, under Sarsfield and Tessé, were too far off and too concerned in guarding the ford to countermarch and arrest Ruvigny’s progress in time. The culminating calamity was, however, the death of St. Ruth, and the delay that followed in bringing a reinforcement to the left.

But no excuse can be offered for the behaviour of the cavalry. Two of the Colonels, Henry Luttrell and Nicholas Purcell, were suspected of treason and their regiments simply right-about-faced and galloped off. Sarsfield’s regiment, which was detached from its commander who was on the right, followed after, and the only excuse that was ever offered was that the cavalry horses were stiff from waiting throughout the long day, and that they were taken at a disadvantage and had not room enough to charge. But even if the fullest weight be allowed for all these circumstances, it leaves the flight of the cavalry in utter indifference to the plight of the infantry an unexplained enigma and an indelible shame.

The full French report states that the heat of the battle lasted three hours, that the Irish infantry fought well, and inflicted as heavy a loss on the English as they suffered themselves. The losses of the Irish infantry were exceedingly heavy. Some regiments, those in particular of Lords Clanrickarde and Kenmare, were practically destroyed. The two Major-Generals, Dorington and John Hamilton, were taken prisoners. Lord Galway and Lord Dillon (Theobald) were killed. Lords Kenmare, Slane, Bophin (afterwards fifth Earl of Clanrickarde) and Duleek (Bellew) were taken prisoners and kept so till after the Limerick Con-

vention. John Hamilton, the ablest soldier of all the Hamilton brothers, died of his wounds in Dublin three months later. Plunkett who, strangely enough, omits the name of Lord Dillon, writes : —

“ In the long and bloody strife, both on the field of bravery and in the accidental retreat, there were slain of the Irish officers and soldiers about two thousand, and six hundred wounded. The wounded soon almost all recovered, and joined the army at Limerick within six weeks after. Amongst the slain was the great General St. Ruth, worthy of lasting memory. Next after him the noble youth the Lord Bourk (de Burgh), Viscount of Galway, son to the potent Earl of Clanrickarde. He was despatched by foreigners after quarter given as 'tis said. Brigadier Connel, Brigadier William Mansfield Barker, an English gentleman early killed by a cannon ball. Brigadier Henry MacJohn O'Neil, Colonel Charles Moore of Kildare with his Lieutenant-Colonel and Major, Colonel David Bourk, Colonel Ulick Bourk, Colonel Constantine Macguire, Colonel James Talbot of Templeogue, Colonel Arthur, Colonel Mahony, Lieutenant-Colonel Morgan an English gentleman. Major Purcell, Sir John Everard of Fethard, Colonel Felix O'Neil, and Dean Alexius Stafford of Wexford, an undaunted zealot and a most pious churchman, who fell in front of the royal regiment as he was encouraging them on the first charge. There were made prisoners the Lord of Duleek, the Lord of Slane, the Lord of Bophin, son to the Earl of Clanrickarde, the Lord of Kenmare, Major-General Dorington, Major-General John Hamilton, who died at Dublin soon after of his wounds, Brigadier Tuite, Colonel Walter Bourk, Colonel Gordon O'Neil, Colonel Thomas Butler of Kilcash, Colonel O'Connel, Colonel Edmund Madden, and several others.”

Creditable as it was to the men who fought there, the battle of Aughrim was really the fatal blow to the Irish cause. With the exception of St. Ruth and Tessé no French officers were present. It was an entirely Irish battle fought under a French general, who certainly displayed great tactical ability, but the death of this general left the Irish army without a leader. No one seemed able to concoct a tactical plan, and all Tyrconnell could do was to prepare as well as he could to defend Limerick a second time whilst he sent urgent messengers to France to implore material assistance at once, to enable him to hold out through the winter, and a fresh army for the New Year. He sent the Earl of Abercorn and Dr. Doran on this mission in separate ships. Lord Abercorn's vessel was intercepted by a Dutch man-of-war, and he was killed in the fight. Dr. Doran, more fortunate, reached St. Germain, and told the story of Aughrim and how affairs stood in Ireland.

The battle of the Boyne : together with an account based on French and other unpublished records of the war in Ireland (1688-1691) and of the formation of the Irish brigade in the service of France (1911)

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