



# DUMONT DE BOSTAQUET AND THE HUGUENOTS AT THE SIEGE OF LIMERICK, 1690

BY HARMAN MURTAGH AND MICHAEL O'DWYER

Isaac Dumont de Bostaquet (1632-1709) was a Huguenot whose memoirs<sup>(1)</sup> include an account of the 1690 siege of Limerick, at which he was present, while serving with the Huguenot contingent in the Williamite army. In his younger days, Bostaquet had served in the French army under Turenne, before retiring, after the first of his three marriages, to his family chateau of La Fontelaye, near Dieppe in Normandy. The oppression of French Protestants that followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes eventually obliged him to abandon his property and flee to Holland in 1688. The exiled Huguenots were well received by William of Orange and many, including Bostaquet, accompanied him to England in November. Subsequently, Bostaquet and his family settled at Greenwich.

In 1689, Bostaquet sailed to Ireland with Schomberg's expedition. This force included a significant Huguenot contingent, comprised of three battalions of infantry and a cavalry regiment, raised in England during the spring.<sup>(2)</sup> For the many Huguenots who were veterans of the French and Dutch armies, these units were a much-needed opportunity of honourable employment, as well as a chance to cross swords with their old adversary, Louis XIV, who was the chief backer of the Irish Jacobites. However, at about 150, the establishment of officers in the four regiments was insufficient for all who sought places. William was sympathetic to the rest, 500 of whom were attached to the regiments as *incorporés*, or reformed officers, an arrangement whereby they received some pay while on active service.<sup>(3)</sup>

Bostaquet was one of this group, serving as a supernumerary captain attached to the cavalry regiment, whose colonel, until his death at the Boyne, was old Marshal Schomberg himself.<sup>(4)</sup> At a review in 1690, the four French regiments mustered in all about 2,800 officers and men.<sup>(5)</sup>

A number of other Huguenots held commissions in English and Continental regiments, or were present in the army as engineers.<sup>(6)</sup> William had a high regard for the military qualities of the French refugees and relied on them to give a stiffening of experience, professionalism and commitment to his forces in Ireland. Three years' campaigning brought the Huguenot soldiers to all four provinces and there was scarcely any action, large or small, in which they were not involved.

At the first siege of Limerick, the Huguenots were to the fore in the attack on the redoubt to the east of the Irishtown wall near St. John's Gate on 20 August. Colonel Belcastel was wounded in the fighting and his regiment suffered 150 casualties.<sup>(7)</sup> A small supporting detachment of Huguenot cavalry was virtually wiped out. Bostaquet gives an account of these events.<sup>(8)</sup>

A week later the French reformed officers spearheaded the Williamite grenadiers in the major assault on the breach in the Irishtown wall.<sup>(9)</sup> Cambon, one of the Huguenot colonels who was also an engineer, argued that the attack was premature and urged its delay.<sup>(10)</sup> William was under pressure to bring the siege to a conclusion and Cambon's advice was ignored. There was bitter hand-to-hand fighting for

several hours, but eventually, the Williamites were repulsed with heavy losses. Almost 200 French officers were amongst the casualties; Cambon's own regiment, which formed part of the supporting infantry, was left with only six fit to serve.<sup>(11)</sup> One of the wounded Huguenots was Paul de Rapin-Thoyras, a lieutenant in the British regiment of General Douglas, who was hit in the shoulder.<sup>(12)</sup> He survived the ordeal, and later won renown as an historian for his *History of England*, which ran to many editions in the eighteenth century. Some of the wounded officers were sent to Bath to recuperate.<sup>(13)</sup>

Bostaquet was not badly injured, but obtained permission to retire to England in November, and he did not participate in the 1691 campaign in Ireland. He did, however, return to Ireland after the war to settle with his family at Portarlinton where the Huguenot, General Ruvigny – treated Lord Galway in 1692 – had been given an estate by William on which he established a Huguenot refuge, chiefly for old soldiers. Eight of the original settlers were men who had been wounded at Limerick. It was here that Bostaquet died in 1709.<sup>(14)</sup>

In 1692, the French regiments were transferred to the Continent where they remained on active service until the peace of Ryswick ended hostilities. A reduction in the size of William's army followed and the Huguenots were brought back to Ireland to be disbanded in 1699.<sup>(15)</sup> The officers and NCOs received pensions on the Irish establishment; over 400 French pensioners were living in Ireland in 1702.

DUMONT DE BOSTAQUET'S  
ACCOUNT OF THE SIEGE OF  
LIMERICK, 1690.

After five days' march we encamped five miles from Limerick. At midnight the following day, the king sent a large detachment of cavalry under Lord Portland<sup>(16)</sup> to reconnoitre the area. I was ordered to take part and we came within sight of Limerick at sunrise. We identified the place. There was a slight skirmish and the enemy, although numerous, made no effort to attack us, nor to harass us as we withdrew. They sent out some cavalry under cover of the town's cannon and when their curiosity was satisfied, they withdrew. We asked M. Scravenmore<sup>(17)</sup> for his opinion. He told us with an oath that he would have preferred to have spent the morning in bed and that ammunition was needed to chase the rogues.

We came upon the king and the whole court who had come out to meet us. He had taken the precaution of sending the infantry to support us but we did not need them. The king was convinced that his appearance at the place would secure its automatic surrender. This was thought to be Portland's advice. However, we lacked heavy guns and the enemy seemed to us to be too proud to be so accommodating. The more perceptive took the view that we should wait until the ammunition, which was being sent down from Dublin, arrived. The first view prevailed: the weak resistance of the enemy at the Boyne and the retreat of the French under the comte de Lauzun<sup>(18)</sup> gave rise to the opinion that the garrison which was made up only of Irishmen, although numerous, would not endure a siege any more than Wexford, Waterford and Duncannon, which had all surrendered to M. d'Espinguen<sup>(19)</sup> without firing a shot. Consequently, without taking further precautions, we marched towards Limerick.

From the time of our encampment the enemy had set fire to all the castles and even to the smaller houses which were situated on our route to Limerick. The sight filled us with horror as it was a beautiful area inhabited by large numbers of nobility. We arrived in good time. The enemy had sent out infantry to defend the approaches, but they put up very little resistance, and our infantry and dragoons chased them back to their fortifications. The camps were marked out and each of us took up our positions. The king summoned M. Boisseleau, the governor, and requested his surrender. This Frenchman, who wanted to establish his reputation at the expense of the Irish, replied that 'he considered himself greatly honoured to be besieged by such an important prince and that he wished to stage a resistance that would bring him the glory for which he hoped'. To convince us of his determination, he fired a number of cannon shots in our

MÉMOIRES  
D'ISAAC  
DUMONT DE BOSTAQUET  
GENTILHOMME NORMAND  
SUR LES TEMPS QUI ONT PRÉCÉDÉ ET SUIVI  
LA RÉVOCATION  
DE L'ÉDIT DE NANTES  
SUR LE REFUGE ET LES EXPÉDITIONS  
DE GUILLAUME III EN ANGLETERRE  
ET EN IRLANDE

*Title page of the memoirs of Dumont de Bostaquet, Paris, 1864.*

direction. This did not prevent us from establishing camp. As night fell we worked on the approaches and set up our cannon to reply to the enemy's and give the impression that we were well-supplied.

After two days, the trenches were opened. The enemy made a sortie and lost some of their best officers. We made them retreat without incurring any significant losses on our side. But the marquis de Cagny was struck by a musket shot and died three days later. He was sadly missed by the army and I was sorely grieved. I had gone to see him twice; he was a good friend. Since the death of our general [Marshal Schomberg], who held him in high esteem, he had been very depressed. He died with the fortitude and resignation of a good Christian. He was a gentleman of great merit and exemplary piety who had suffered greatly in France for his religion.

While we awaited the arrival of our [siege] cannon we could achieve little beyond a few sporadic attacks. The enemy were content to let us sleep *à la française*, with the result that there was little firing from either side. However, the cannon caused some disturbance from time to time: even the king was obliged to move camp when a bullet pierced the tent of MM. Louvigny and Gendro(?) which was near his.

The enemy, who had a considerable force on the other side of the Shannon, did not sleep. They sent out Sarsfield who crossed the river and marched to intercept our [siege] cannon, of which an Irish Protestant came to inform the king. Count Schomberg<sup>(20)</sup> was of the opinion that we should send a brigade of our cavalry in pursuit. Portland made nonsense of this view and tried to show that it was impossible for Sarsfield to mount an offensive in County Tipperary

which was difficult country. However, as the Irishman insisted that his information was correct, and this would be seen to be the case, the king ordered someone from our regiment to be sent out to gather intelligence. A quartermaster was sent who, having seen the enemy, confirmed the truth.

When a detachment was drawn up and ready at nine o'clock in the evening, the king issued orders. It was now the turn of M. L'Anié,<sup>(21)</sup> major-general, to march. MM. de La Bastide and Moliens were ordered from our regiment and were ready immediately, but the rest took some time with the result that it was two o'clock in the morning before the detachment set out. This gave Sarsfield time to surprise our men who were supposed to be protecting the cannon and who were sleeping peacefully in their tents. He had all their throats cut, including those of the women, and had time to burn all the guncarriages, split two of the guns and destroy the pontoons, together with all the spades and pickaxes destined for the siege. He destroyed all the powder and made off with the money and artillery horses towards Cork.<sup>(22)</sup> M. L'Anié, who had been unable to prevent this devastation, thought he could attack him as he retreated, but he failed to intercept him and returned to the camp without achieving anything. A few naked troopers and some wagoners arrived to break the bad news. It was a detachment of Villiers<sup>(23)</sup> regiment that had supplied the unfortunate escort.

There was consternation amongst the king and his court. Everyone blamed Portland for the upset. As he was the king's favourite, he had many detractors who now had a splendid opportunity to undermine him by stressing the king's prior knowledge of Sarsfield's march.



*Friedrich Herman, Duke of Schomberg.*

This contretemps delayed the siege and boosted morale amongst the Irish: Boisseleau fired off a *feu de joie* and subjected us to a heavy bombardment. There was disquiet in the army. The sutlers and peasantry stayed away from the camp for fear of encountering the enemy. As a result bread and beer became scarce: bread which had formerly cost six or eight sols was now twenty-eight or thirty, and beer was eight or nine sols a quart. Money was scarce and these prices created problems for all.

Our distress at being unable to take any initiative made these problems more acute. It would take time for cannon we had requested from Waterford to arrive and we still awaited those from Dublin. Finally both arrived and we erected two batteries with which we vigorously attacked the town. The enemy had a redoubt outside their fortifications which interfered with our trenches. The king decided to eliminate it by a daylight attack. Le sieur de Boncour, with a detachment of the whole army, was ordered to oppose the enemy cavalry

should they attempt a sortie during the attack. It was my duty to accompany the detachment from our regiment, but La Cailletière, a lieutenant of D'Arènes, went as captain, through the influence of Moliens with Count Schomberg, and had command of thirty men.

At the appointed time the king and his entire entourage retired to the ruins of St. Patrick's chapel where the action could be observed without danger. The count told Moliens in passing to order twenty officers of our regiment to join le sieur de Boncour. Moliens, who saw me there, asked me to go and inform le sieur de La Bastide. La Roche, an *incorporé* captain more senior than I, having heard the count, took the initiative and on arrival at the camp, I discovered that he had informed Cussy. La Bastide was not there and Cussy did not want to take command: he would not do so while La Bastide was in the camp. In the end le sieur de La Bastide took command of three captains and the rest of the subalterns, and I was ordered to remain in charge of the rest of the troop [of

*incorporés*], the whole regiment having been ordered to prepare to mount their horses: so I remained.

The signal was given when the king had arrived and the redoubt to which reference has been made was attacked with great vigour. A sortie by the enemy cavalry was driven back by le sieur de Boncour to the foot of their wall. However, the lengthy exposure to fire from the ramparts resulted in the death or wounding of several officers and troopers, together with their horses. Le sieur de Boncour was slightly injured. La Roche, Hautcharmois and La Roquière, *incorporé* captains in our regiment, were killed in action. At least this was the fate of the first two; the last mentioned was brought back to the camp where he died the following day. Couterne, Cussy's cornet, was wounded and his horse killed beneath him. He could not be removed from his horse without help and having been abandoned, he remained in this sad state for three days and nights. When a truce was made to bury the dead, he was taken from beneath his horse and brought back to the camp where he died that night. He was a good soldier and a man of refinement. Of the whole troop, only one man named Bernard escaped being wounded along with his horse. The rest were either killed, or they or their horses were wounded. Saint-Jehan, D'Aussy's cadet, whose camp was near us, received three slight wounds and his horse was wounded in the thigh.

We did, however, gain the redoubt, and this vigorous action, in which the French had the largest share, pleased the king who was in a position to view the whole affair. Our whole regiment mounted up in order to support this depleted detachment. A bullet covered le sieur de Boncour in dust while he was having a wound dressed, but did him no harm. Le sieur Nimus, a Dutch colonel, who had come to relieve him was immediately wounded and had to return. We remained until evening. The enemy did not show any desire to recapture the redoubt and we returned to camp. In the evening bombs were fired into the town which increased the disorder. At day-break we recommenced the cannonade and the firing of bombs. The works were discontinued for two or three days; during this time heavy rain fell.

It was now my turn to command the guard. The practice was that in daytime it was posted on the other side of the Shannon, and recrossed the river in the evening, but I hesitated as to whether I should cross or not. From the moment that I was on horseback in front of the camp of the king's bodyguard, where I was to meet my party, the rain fell so heavily that I knew I would have difficulty crossing and that the return journey would certainly be hazardous. I marched when my troop was ready and as I approached the river bank, I



detached some cavalry to sound out the ford and reconnoitre the daytime post. At this time Maupas, an *incorporé* captain in our regiment, was returning from the front line. My cavalry, who saw his troops coming, recrossed the river and he and his detachment did likewise. I asked him what had caused his speedy return. He told me that his guide feared the river would swell and that it was not navigable. He added that he would not advise me to cross it as it might not be possible to return. As I was in a dilemma, I sent my quartermaster to Count Schomberg to request his orders. He commanded me not to cross the river and I obeyed. The continuous heavy rain caused extreme difficulty. The ground was heavy, the horses could not hold their footing and the cavalry preferred to be mounted rather than on foot. It rained all day and in the evening, I changed ground and ordered a section of my cavalry to advance on foot. The river had not swollen very much and I ordered some of my cavalry to cross it to see whether anything was in sight before taking up position for the night.

The rain ceased and this gave Colonel Hamilton,<sup>(24)</sup> who was encamped there with his regiment, an opportunity to come to see me. He asked me to patrol a route leading to a ford by which the enemy could cross to provoke us. He said that he had been unable to persuade the officers who had preceded me to carry out the patrol, and he complained about the poor quality of security in this sector. I told him to have a good night's sleep and I kept the cavalry on the alert throughout the night.

The bombs burnt a hay barn and caused a large fire. I thought there would be much disorder in the town, but a grenadier, who had gone out in the morning and who came back to my post, told me that it was only the barn which had been set on fire. I sent him to the count [Schomberg]. Soon afterwards a lieutenant and his valet, both mounted, who had deserted from the enemy a day or two previously, came to me. I also sent him to the count, after which I came back to the camp to dry myself and remove the mud.

Two days later the king held a council of war and it was decided to launch a daylight attack on the counterscarp. Several officers disapproved of this decision. However, an assault party was formed from all the grenadiers in the army, who were divided into companies at the head of which were placed officers of the three French [infantry] regiments. The entire force was commanded by the sieur de La Barbe, a brave and efficient officer. The cavalry stood ready to mount and when the time came, the king came back to his post, having run the risk of being intercepted by the enemy because he had advanced too near the town.

When the signal was given the assault party ran forward to take the ditch. The



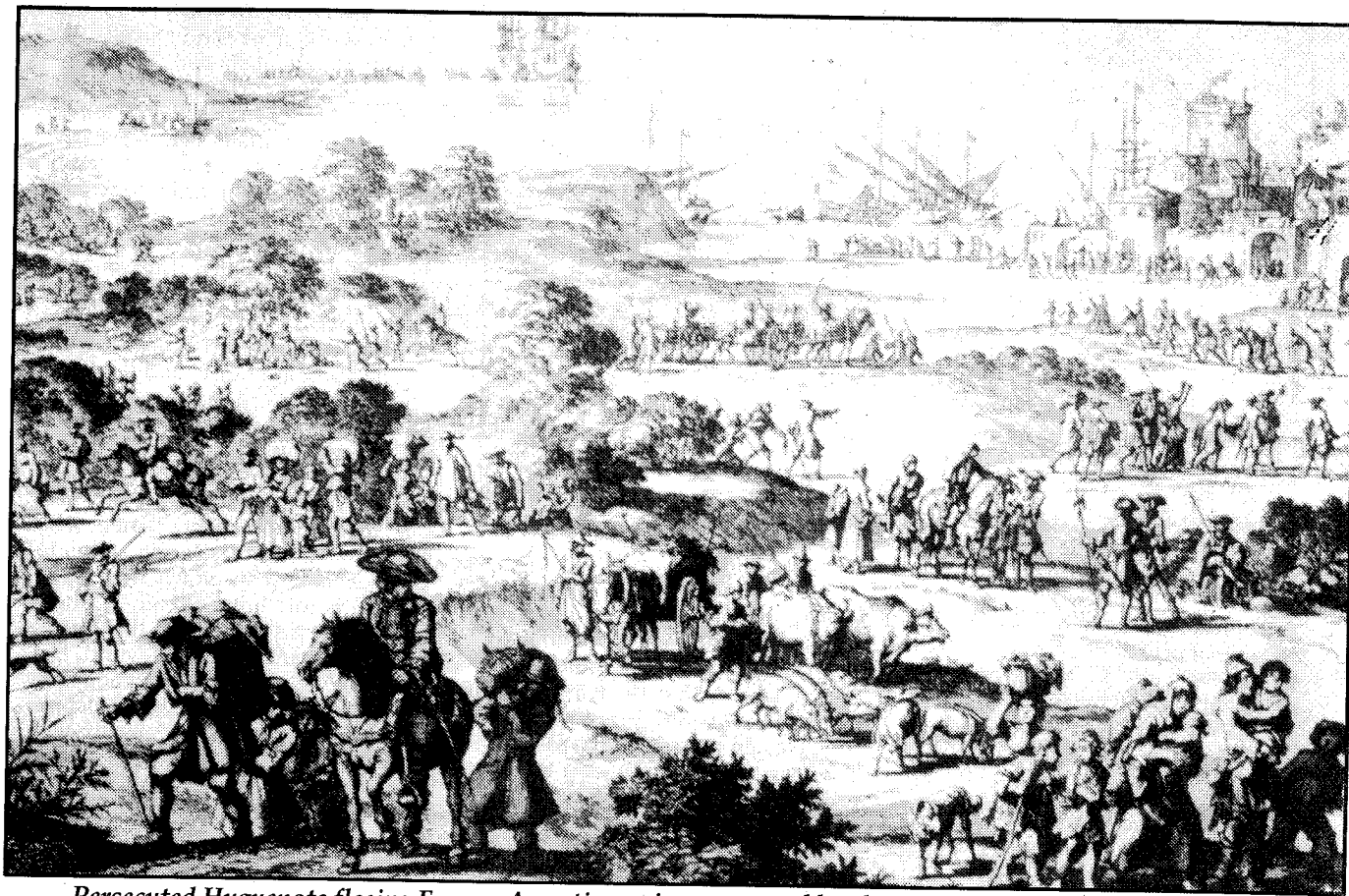
*Henri de Massue de Ruvoigny, first Earl of Galway (1648-1720).*

enemy abandoned it, throwing away their weapons. The rampart was approached by means of a breach. A detachment of English grenadiers entered the town and chased the enemy from their first entrenchment, but as they were not supported, the king's wish being only to secure the counterscarp, they were cut to pieces. Le Bourgay, who led them, followed the enemy as they returned towards their rampart, thinking that he would be able to withdraw. He was questioned by officers of the garrison who would not accept that he was on their side, although he had the presence of mind to remove the green sprig from his hat and hide his high collar. He placed his sword in the hands of a major from the place who spoke French. The enemy charged our troops as they withdrew and killed or wounded more than 1500 men. Martel, a grandson of the baron de Saint-Just, was killed on the breach shouting '*ville gagnée*'. Bruneval was wounded in the arm by a musket, and La Motte Fremontier in the leg. I mention these four as they were relatives and friends. This undertaking resulted in the loss of many men. The

Dutch Guards lost many officers, but the heaviest casualties were incurred by the French regiments of La Caillemotte,<sup>(25)</sup> now commanded by Becastel<sup>(26)</sup> who was wounded, and Cambon.

This unsuccessful venture boosted the morale of the enemy and disheartened our troops. Early in the morning I went out to see my friends in the infantry. I found Bruneval and La Motte wounded and learned of the death of Martel and several others. I looked for Le Bourgay in his tent but could obtain no information as to his whereabouts. As his regiment was on duty in the trenches, I thought he had remained there, but sometime later when I returned to my tent, Ferment came to inform me that he was a prisoner in the town. As I was concerned about this relative who, apart from his personal merits, was the son of a mother whom I always loved and respected, I thought that I should try to secure his freedom. With this in mind I went to the king whom I found at table.

Both he and the whole court were downcast because of the failure of the previous day and I never saw him so dejected. When they rose from the table, I



*Persecuted Huguenots fleeing France. A partisan view, engraved by the Dutch artist, Jan Luyken in 1696.*

spoke to Lord Portland and asked him to help me obtain the release of a relative who was imprisoned in the town. He enquired as to his name and when I told him, he assured me that he was alive, and that the governor had noted his detention and promised to take care of the matter. I was delighted and asked him to discuss it with the king or that I would do so myself. He assured me that he would do so as soon as he had an opportunity.

Having obtained this promise, I went back to my tent with the intention of returning next day to pursue the matter, as courtiers easily forget their promises. However, I was extremely surprised on arriving at the king's quarters to learn that both he and Lord Portland had left. Then, as I knew that Count Solms<sup>(27)</sup> had remained to command the army, I went to his tent and made the same request to him. He spoke to me sincerely, but asked me to give him time as the enemy's prisoners were far away and the matter could not be dealt with immediately. In this regard M. Ginkel,<sup>(28)</sup> a cavalry general who had just returned from executing a mission to capture a castle on the Shannon and was now with Count Solms, told me very kindly that he would find a way to obtain my relative's release and that he would write to M. Boisseleau in such persuasive terms that he would be unable to refuse. He assured me that he was very pleased to be in a

position to help me. I then took leave of these generals and returned to my tent.

Hardly anybody in our regiment knew about the king's departure. The news surprised all and I must admit that I was astonished at the haste with which the court had left. We did not doubt that we would be breaking camp the next day and, in fact, in the evening the order came to take down the tents and move the baggage. At nightfall the artillery train and the wounded men moved off. At daybreak the fodder was burned and the siege raised. Throughout the night our horses were bridled and saddled. The whole army marched away in orderly fashion and the enemy, relieved to discover that the siege was over, did not trouble us on our retreat.

Thus after a siege of twenty-two days the town was abandoned to the great disappointment of the entire army and to the delight of Boisseleau, who by his vigorous defence had brought great honour to himself. There was much speculation about this affair which brought no glory to the king as he had incurred many losses: very few people have fathomed this secret and I would prefer to remain silent on the matter.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Charles Read and Francis Waddington (eds), *Mémoires inédits de Dumont de Bostaquet, Gentilhomme, Normand* (Paris, 1864). The account

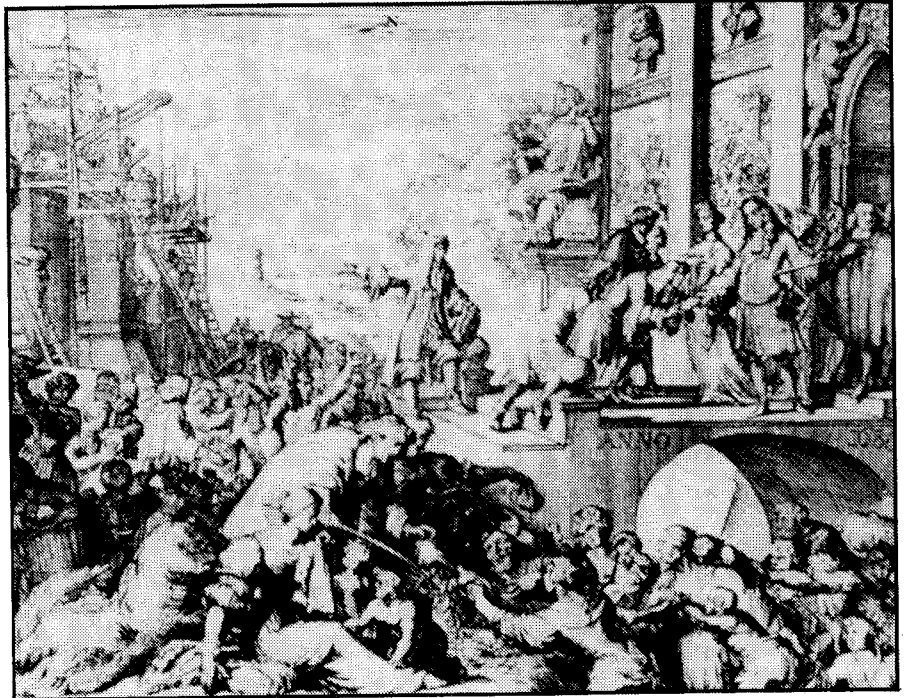
of the siege of Limerick is on pp. 280-9.

2. Harman Murtagh, 'Huguenot involvement in the Irish Jacobite war, 1689-91' in C.E.J. Caldicott, H. Gough and J.P. Pittion (eds.), *The Huguenots and Ireland: anatomy of an emigration* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 225 *et seq.*
3. For lists of regimental officers see Charles Dalton, *English army lists and commission registers, 1661-1714* (London, 1891-1904), iii, *passim*; for lists of reformed officers see National Army Museum, Chelsea, MSS and TSS 1801-38, 8303-97.
4. *Mémoires inédits, passim*, and appendix.
5. [G. Story], *A true and impartial history of the most material occurrences in the kingdom of Ireland during the last two years* (London, 1691), 95-7.
6. Dalton, *English army lists*, iii, *passim*; K. Danaher and J.G. Simms (eds), *The Danish force in Ireland, 1690-1* (Dublin, 1962), 11; Rolf Loeber, 'Biographical dictionary of engineers in Ireland, 1600-1730' in *The Irish Sword*, xiii (1977-9), *passim*.
7. *Danish force in Ire.*, 70-1.
8. *Mémoires inédits*, 284-5.
9. *Danish force in Ire.*, 73.
10. Story, *Impartial history*, 128-32. François de Cambon (d. 1693), colonel of one of William's Huguenot regiments.



Portrait of Paul de Rapin - Thoyras.

11. Danish force in Ire., 74; Charles E. Lart, 'The Huguenot regiments' in *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, ix (1909-11), 492-3.
12. *The History of England* by Mr. Rapin de Thoyras, translated into English with additional notes by N. Tindal, M.A. (London, 1743 edn.), i, ix.
13. *Calendar of state papers, domestic series, 1690-1*, 375.
14. Raymond Pierre Hylton, 'The Huguenot settlement at Portarlinton' in *The Huguenots and Ireland*, 305, 309.
15. Kenneth Patrick Ferguson, 'The army in Ireland from the Restoration to the Act of Union' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 1980), 55-6.
16. Hans Willem Bentinck, Earl of Portland (1649-1709), William's trusted Dutch adviser who was also a general officer in the army.
17. Adam van der Duyn, Heer van Scravenmore ('sGravemoer), Dutch cavalry major-general.
18. Antoin de Caumont, comte (subsequently duc) de Lauzun (1633-1723), captain-general and commander of the French troops sent by Louis XIV to Ireland in 1690.
19. Apparently the reference is to the Dutch brigadier, Abraham Eppinger.
20. Meinhard Schomberg (1641-1719), second son of the Duke of Schomberg and cavalry general. He was made Duke of Leinster in 1691.
21. i.e. Sir John Lanier (d. 1692), English major-general.
22. Actually, Sarsfield recrossed the Shannon at Portumna.
23. Sir Edward Villiers, English cavalry colonel.
24. There were at least three Williamite colonels with the surname Hamilton: Gustavus Hamilton, later Viscount Boyne (1639-1737); George Hamilton, later Earl of Orkney (1666-1737) and Gustavus Hamilton,

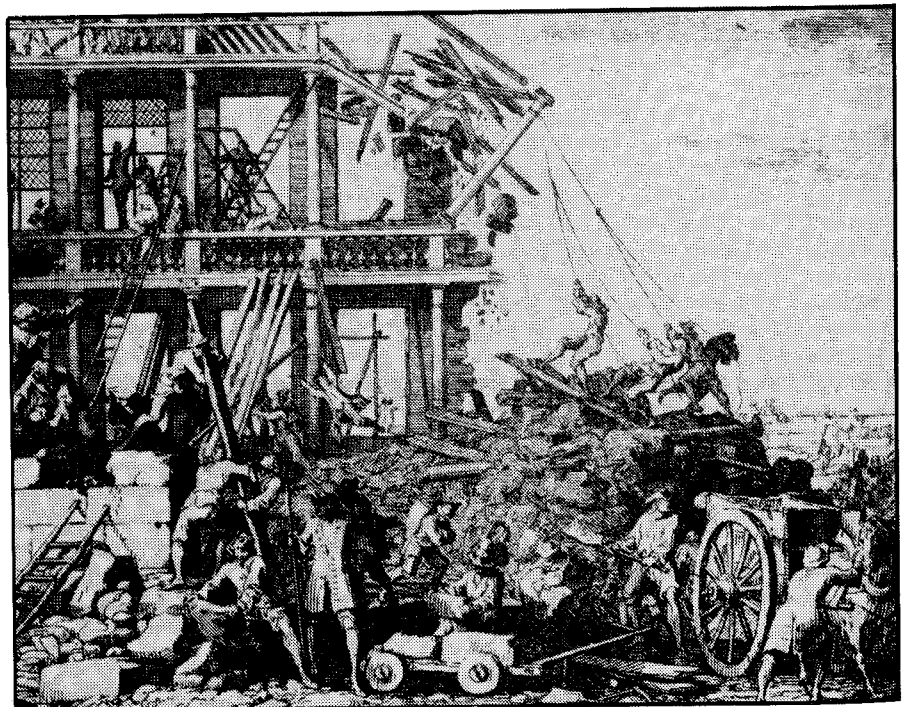


William and Mary receiving Huguenot refugees and providing them with money and food; detail from 'Tyrannies towards the Protestants in France' by Romeyn de Hooghe, 1686.

- some time governor of Enniskillen (d. 1691).
25. Pierre de Ruvigny, comte de La Caillemotte (d. 1690). He was mortally wounded at the Boyne. His brother, Henri, later Lord Galway, served in Ireland as a major-general in 1691.
26. Pierre de Belcastel, marquis d'Avezé (d. 1710) succeeded La Caillemotte as colonel in July, 1690.
27. Heinrich Maastricht, count of Solms-

Braunfels (1636-93), kinsman of William and Dutch general, who briefly commanded in Ireland in 1690, after William's return to England.

28. Godard van Reede, baron de Ginkel (1644-1703), Williamite cavalry general who commanded the army in Ireland in the successful 1691 campaign, and was created Earl of Athlone.



The demolition of the Huguenot Temple at Charenton, 1685. Engraving by Le Clerc.