



THE DUTCH AT LIMERICK

BY PIETER TESCH

INTRODUCTION

The events that led King-Stadtholder William III of Orange to lay siege to Limerick in August, 1690, with an international army, including 6,000 Dutch troops, began in 1672. In that 'year of calamity', the French, under the Sun King Louis, XIV, invaded the Netherlands and nearly succeeded in over-running the independent small Protestant Republic of the United Provinces.

The Dutch Republic had no army of consequence in those days and, like the ancient Athenians, the Dutch had relied on the hegemony of their navy for the defence of the state. After the Peace of West-Phalia in 1648, which ended the 80 years war of independence against the Spanish Empire, the Estates-General, the Dutch national confederal parliament under the control of the 'regents', the mercantile patrician ruling classes, had demobilised their standing army, one of the most professional and largest in Europe of that time.

The regents, especially from the seagoing provinces, Zeeland and Holland, headed by those from Amsterdam, claimed that they were already paying enough in peace-time to maintain the navy, which was considered as essential to protect the Dutch commercial interests on the high, 'seven' seas. While the Dutch navy was paid by a special tax on merchant shipping, under the control of Estates-General, the army was left to the individual provinces and major towns, in accordance with the Dutch confederal constitution.

Every major city and town boasted its militia of 'burghers', or 'schutters' as they were called, and made famous by the paintings of Rembrandt and Frans Hals. These huge pictures show that the middle-class part-timers liked a good night out and were also able to disperse a mob during a food or tax riot. Moreover, unlike the regents, the Dutch lower classes were fierce Orangists. But the 'schutters' were certainly not able for the crack of cannon and musket-fire in a battle with a regular army like the French in 1672.

The true reason why the regents stood down the Dutch standing army in 1650



Johan de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland and architect of Dutch maritime and financial strength; his murder in 1672 smoothed William's path to power.

was that they did not trust it, as it was too closely associated with the House of Orange. During the 80 years war from the time of William Taciturn, the first Orange Stadtholder, when the Dutch Revolt was in its popular stage, fighting for national independence and Calvinistic Protestantism, the army had become a powerful institution, aligned with the House of Orange.

Under the Stadtholdership of Frederick Henry the 3rd, son of William Taciturn and grandfather of William III, this link was strengthened and was to give rise to tensions. The office of 'stadhouder' (stadtholder), a position roughly equivalent to that of Lord Deputy of Ireland, and dating from the times of the Spanish-Habsburg Empire, was not hereditary. But as it had been held by the House of Orange since the foundation of the United Provinces, the stadtholdership, whose office had changed into that of president and

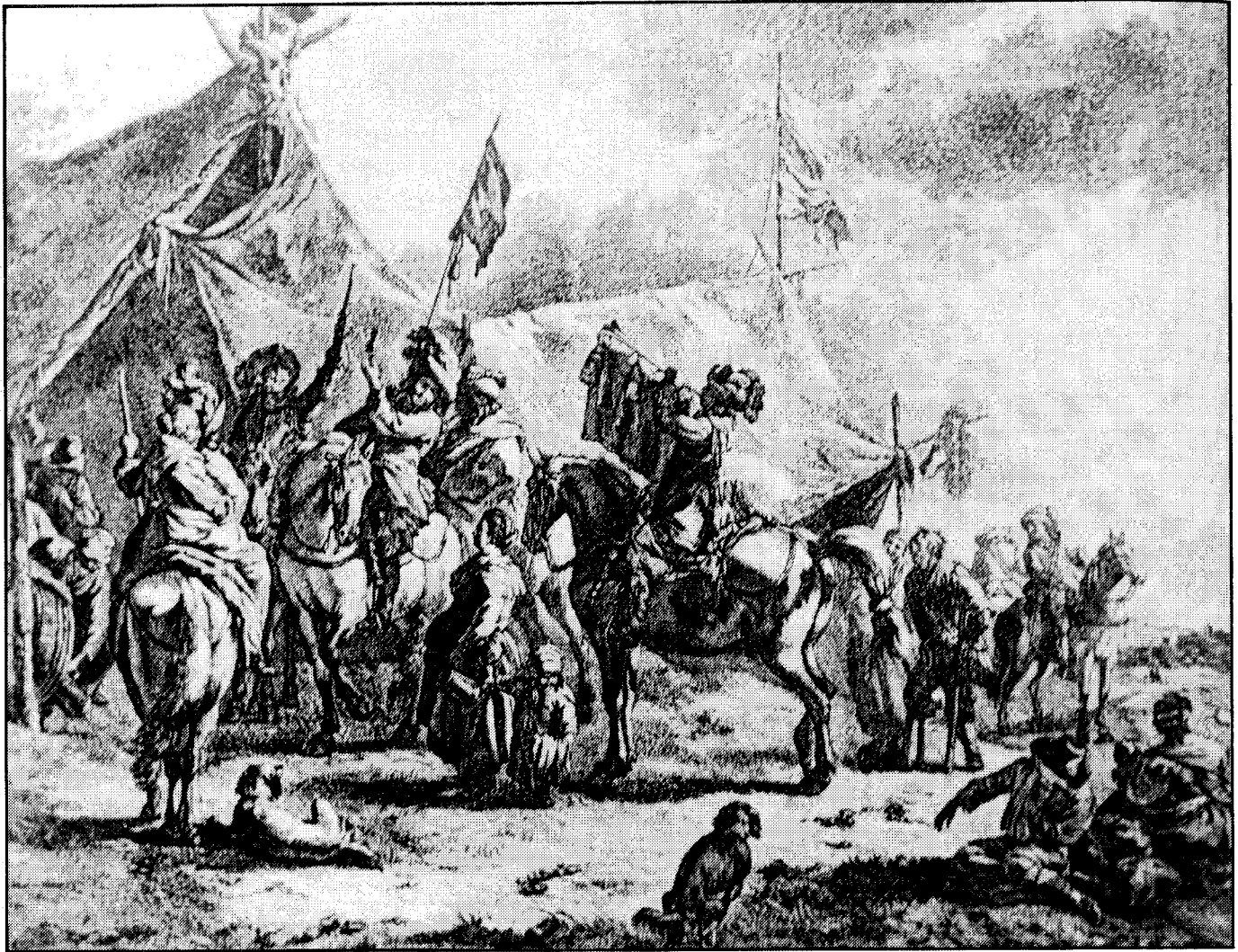
commander-in-chief of the Republic, had become quasi-monarchical.

Encouraged by the French, who were then on friendly terms with the Dutch, Frederick Henry developed monarchical aspirations, although, in reality, the stadtholder, as the executive, had still to listen to the Estates-General and the Estates, the assemblies of the individual provinces. Certainly, the Oranges had not even achieved the position of the later Stuarts of a 'king in parliament'. Nevertheless, the alarm of the regents, who were, for the largest part, republicans, further increased with the prospect of an imminent monarchy, when Frederick Henry's son, William Henry, the later Stadtholder William II, married Mary Stuart, daughter of Charles I, in 1641.

Immediately succeeding his father, after his death in 1647, William II tried to relieve himself of the constitutional shackles through moulding the army, the Dutch Reformed Church (the state-church), and the Orangist regents into a formidable court party. In 1650, his attempted putsch failed, however, after he had unsuccessfully tried to seize Amsterdam with the help of the army, when he found that its gates had been closed. As a result, one of his favourite officers, Frederick Hermann von Schomberg, of an aristocratic Palatine family, who died later at the battle of the Boyne after a varied international military career, had to leave the Republic under a cloud.

The subsequent early death of William II on 6 November, 1650, eight days before the birth of William Henry (the later William III), meant the end of the monarchical aspirations. Even when Stadtholder William III was king of England, Scotland and Ireland, these aspirations were not revived and he reigned in an absolutely constitutional manner, with a great deference to the wishes of 'the high, mighty gentlemen of the Estates-General'.

The death of William II created the opportunity for the anti-Orangist regents, especially in the province of Holland, to enact a number of measures which virtually abolished the stadtholdership, effectively ending the role of the House of Orange in the Republic. In 1654, when the Estates-General decided



Dutch camp scene, c. 1660. Print by Jan de Visscher, after Philips Wouwermans (1619-68). National Army Museum, London.

to dispense with the stadtholdership, the States of Holland declared by the Act of Exclusion that they would never again elect the Prince of Orange or any of his descendants to the office or any other high public position.

This was not only the wish of the Dutch anti-Organist regents, headed by the 'Raadpensionaris' (Grand Pensioner, or Counsellor) of Holland and the Estates-General, Johan de Witt, but Oliver Cromwell's as well. In the peace negotiations at the end of the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652-54), the Cromwellian Commonwealth stipulated that the young Prince William was to be debarred from office, as Cromwell feared that because of the Orange-Stuart connections the Dutch Republic might become a base for a Stuart restoration.

The ruling elites of the two Protestant republics, in spite of the fact that they both shared the objective of excluding the Oranges and Stuarts, were engaged in a bitter maritime rivalry, resulting in a sea war, followed, in short succession, by two others (1665-67 and 1672-74). The Stuart restoration did not ameliorate the Anglo-Dutch competition over the hegemony of the world's sea trade. In

spite of superior English naval firepower, the Dutch navy showed that 'Brittania did not rule the waves', and England failed to break the Dutch world trade supremacy.

In the meantime, the young Prince of Orange grew up under the control of Johan de Witt as the 'Kind van State' (child/ward of state), after his mother had died. The boy was raised on strict lines, laid down by Constantijn Huygens, his counsellor and treasurer. Besides the study of the Dutch reformed faith, this regime included a simple diet, exercise and plenty of fresh air, which he needed as a delicate and asthmatic child. This illness remained with him until his death, but this handicap and his visibly humped back did not stop him from active involvement in hunting and fighting throughout his life.

When William reached the age of 15, he became more actively involved in the politics of the time. He was sworn in as the Prince of Orange, after Louis XIV had restored to him the independent principality in southern France, on condition that he appoint a Catholic governor. Although the official religion of the small state had been Calvinism, the Catholic

majority of the principality was left undisturbed in their religion. In the Dutch Republic he assumed, in 1668, his hereditary title of First Noble of Zeeland. This was a gesture of challenge to the anti-Orangist leadership of the 'Raadpensionaris' of Holland, De Witt, by the Estates of Zeeland, which balked at the dominance of Holland.

A clear sign of a change of mood in the Republic came in 1670 when William paid his first visit to England, where he was warmly welcomed by his uncle, Charles II. The latter expressed satisfaction with his nephew, but was dismayed to find him far from being pliant or susceptible to his influence, and found, instead, an ardent Protestant and Dutch patriot. The dissipation of the English Court soon made William ill at ease. Within a few months, Charles entered into a secret alliance with France, the so-called Treaty of Dover, whereby both countries pledged to attack the Dutch and Charles to convert to Catholicism. The ensuing war, which started in 1672, was to change dramatically the course of history, not only for the Netherlands, but for France, Britain and Ireland as well.



Pikeman in a Zeeland regiment.



Pikeman in a Gelderland regiment.



Pikeman and sergeant in a Gelderland regiment.



Sergeant in a Utrecht regiment.



Sergeant in a Holland regiment.



Musketeer in a Holland regiment.

The 'year of calamity', 1672, when the country was 'beyond salvation', the people 'in despair' and the regents 'without reason', was a rude awakening for the complacent Dutch to the political realities of later 17th century Europe. While the Dutch navy was capable of inflicting a series of defeats on the English navy, leaving its merchant shipping so unprotected that Charles II had to break away from his alliance and conclude a separate peace with the United Provinces in 1674, the country had been nearly overrun by the French. To save themselves from disaster, the Dutch had to break the dykes and flood the country, so as to stem the advance of the French into the rich and powerful province of Holland, after they had already overrun three provinces within a fortnight.

To their horror, the Dutch realised that Louis XIV's campaign was not only aimed at breaking the powerful position

of the Dutch Republic and plundering its riches, but that it was also intent on Catholicisation as part of the Counter-Reformation. The anti-Orangist regents of Holland were blamed for the calamities because of their appeasement policies towards the French, the neglect of the army and failure to defend the land borders, and their reliance on German allies and city militias.

In a political revolution, the anti-Orangist regents were swept from power, and William's appointment as Captain-General and Admiral-General for a single campaign was changed by the Estates-General into an appointment for life over the whole Republic. They also elected him Stadtholder, as the regime collapsed in chaos.

The symbols of the old order, Johan de Witt and his brother, Cornelis, were lynched by an angry mob in The Hague. It has been suggested that William could have interfered and saved them, as Johan

had been his guardian when he was the child of state, but he did not do so. However, the change of power was effected without any further loss of life and William took care that other prominent anti-Orangists were not victimised while he tried to cement the different political factions into the one common goal of defeating the French.

With very little experience and few advisers, William had to re-organise the army and to go on the counter-offensive from behind the 'Hollandse Water-linie' (the flooded districts which had formed the last line of Dutch defence). It is during this time that the famous Blue Guard regiment of grenadiers was formed, and it later became William's household regiment. It was also during this campaign that a new generation of army officers made their name, including Ouwerkerk, Count van Solms and Godert de Ginkel, Baron of Amerongen, who were all to serve under William in Ireland.

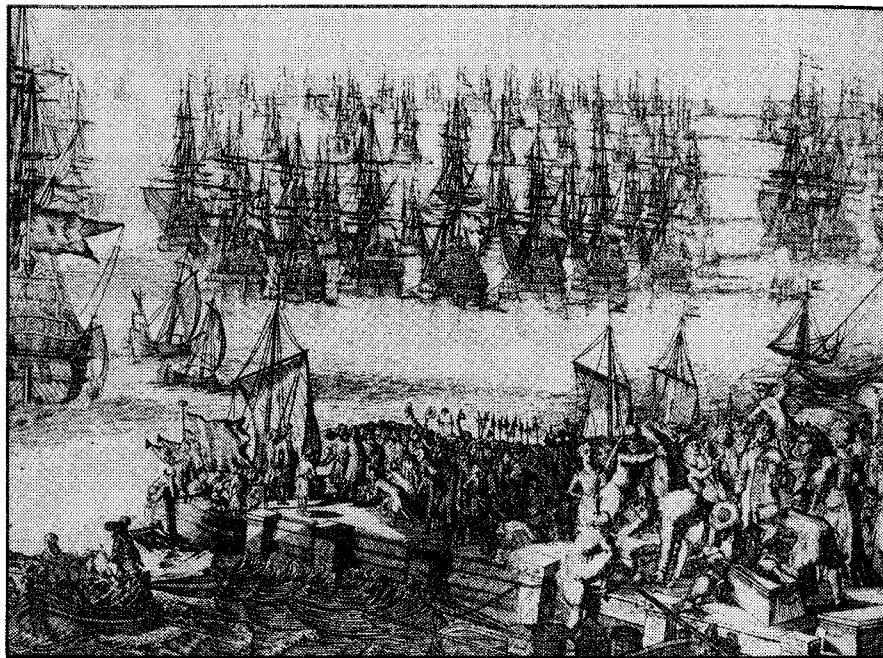
The war against France dragged on until 1678, when the Peace of Nijmegen was signed. After the French had been driven out of the northern low countries, the French army, under the command of the Duke of Schomberg, who had gone into French service and, although being mistrusted as a Protestant, was one of the few generals Louis could rely on, prevented a total and humiliating defeat.

The Peace of Nijmegen (1678) not only preserved the territorial integrity of the Dutch Republic, but also caused Louis to moderate his economic war against the Dutch. This represented a considerable victory, but for William the peace was a moral failure, as he felt that it fell short, not of what military effort might have achieved, but of what he perceived as God's expectations. He saw the change in Dutch fortunes as a miracle, which strengthened his faith in divine providence and his conviction that he had been chosen by God as His instrument to fight against Louis. To contain France became William's chief concern and the basis of his foreign policy.

In his own country, William had, by the age of 28, become a tried and tested leader, and was considered a liberator like his great-grandfather, William Taciturn, and who, like him, believed strongly in toleration and the rule of law. The United Provinces were governed by an assembly of elected representatives, although the franchise was limited to men with property qualifications and membership of the state church, the Dutch Reformed Church. But probably unique in 17th century Europe, the Dutch Republic's constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience, and its freedoms of expression and publication were the most liberal in Europe. Only the works of the Jewish philosopher Spinoza were banned for alleged atheism.

All Protestant denominations and the Jews enjoyed full, open worship and clerical organisation. Amsterdam was called the Jerusalem of the North because of its thriving Jewish community, including descendants of refugees from Portugal like Spinoza.

The substantial Catholic minority in the United Provinces was debarred from political life and was not allowed the open worship of their religion; their church was repressed, but, unlike the 18th century Irish Catholics under the Penal Laws, the Dutch Catholics were not discriminated against in respect of property and the right to carry arms. Protestant Dissenters, Jews and Catholics were welcomed, even encouraged, to join the service of the state at all levels, including William's own household. Many of the Blue Guard regiment were Catholic, although William remained opposed to the granting of political rights to Catholics in the Dutch Republic and in the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland.



Dutch fleet leaving Hellevoetsluys for England.

Unlike any other ruler of a major European power, William was the only constitutional head of state/government of the time. His Stuart relations in their three kingdoms were still holding on to a considerable amount of royal power, but the manner in which Charles II and James II exercised that power continued to cause problems. In fact, it could well be said that constitutional monarchy properly began in British history with the Williamite intervention and the resulting 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688.

For his powerful struggle against Louis, William needed the Stuart kingdoms, besides the Protestant powers of Scandinavia and Germany, such as Brandenburg-Prussia. William's marriage to his cousin, Mary Stuart, daughter of James II, in 1677, gave him the necessity and opportunity to take a deeper interest in English politics. In 1681, he visited England again, largely in a bridge-building capacity, but relations with his uncles had become strained because of the exclusion crisis. William was, in fact, involved in the background moves, when he learned that his father-in-law might not be able to keep his crown.

After James II's accession in 1685 had made Mary, his eldest daughter, heiress presumptive, and William heir presumptive by marriage, William's concern was to improve his strained relationship with his father-in-law. Initially, he met with some success, but he refused to support James in his policy to repeal the Test Act. Although he agreed to assure Catholics of reasonable liberty, like in the Dutch Republic, he considered the Test Act a safeguard for the Protestant religion. Moreover, he feared a Puritan/Republican backlash which might endanger the monarchy in the three kingdoms.

As James' Catholicisation policy

gained momentum in 1687, William's Dutch and English agents started the process which led to the invasion. This act must be seen against the background of Louis's expansionist foreign policy and his aggressive anti-Protestantism in France, which augured grave danger for William unless he could prevent it. In 1682, French troops again occupied William's principality of Orange.

It was Louis's own internal and external policies which gave William the opportunity to form an European alliance against France. While Louis tried to portray himself as the Catholic champion by the increasing brutal treatment of his own Protestant subjects, the Huguenots, he harassed his Catholic neighbour Spain, ruled by one branch of the Habsburgs, while he actively supported the Ottoman Turks, who were defeated before Vienna in 1683, against the other branch of Habsburgs, the German Emperors. The forced conversions of Protestants at home, and the support of the Turks drew the condemnation of Pope Innocent XI.

The persecution of French Protestants, culminating in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which had guaranteed a number of rights to the Huguenots, alarmed Protestant opinion in Europe, particularly in England, and enhanced the popularity of William of Orange as the Protestant champion. French Protestants began to leave the country by 1680, and the exodus gathered in speed and volume in 1686 and 1687 after the revocation, which abolished Protestantism officially as a separate religion in France. It is estimated that some 300,000 Protestants fled from France, firstly, to the Dutch Republic, but later to Britain, Ireland and Brandenburg-Prussia.

The French economy suffered from



William of Orange puts ashore at Tor Bay, November, 1688.

the loss of these industrious merchants and craftsmen, but also the French military power sustained a serious blow, as 12,000 Protestant soldiers and 3,000 experienced officers joined foreign armies, often Protestant and hostile to France. Amongst these were Henri de Massue, marquis de Ruvigny, his father and his brother Pierre, who died at the Boyne; Henri de Ruvigny, who became later first Earl of Galway after his role at the battle of Aughrim; Frederick Hermann von Schomberg and his son, Meinhard, who left France in 1687. Schomberg campaigned in the service of the Elector of Brandenburg-Prussia, Frederick William I, against Louis in the Rhineland, and entered into discussions with William about possible developments in England and the rest of Europe. He accompanied William, as his second-in-command, on 5 November, 1688, to Torbay, with an army which included a great number of Huguenots. Many of these campaigned in Ireland at the Boyne and the sieges of Limerick. With French forces in both the Williamite and Jacobite armies, it could well be said that the French civil and religious wars were fought out again on Irish soil; indeed some of the combatants might even have been friends and relatives.

At the battle of the Boyne, Schomberg plunged across the river, after seeing that three Huguenot infantry battalions had wavered in the face of a scourging French fire from the Jacobite side, which had killed the commander, Caillemotte. He rallied his co-religionists shouting: *Allons, messieurs, voilà vos persecuteurs*, ('Come on, gentlemen, there are your persecutors'). Within seconds, he was dead, cut down by two sabre blows to the head and a bullet in the neck. Not deterred, however, by the death of their most famous commander, the French

Protestants forced the French in the Jacobite army to withdraw from their positions.

It was probably an appropriate end for the 74 years old Schomberg, who had been always faithful to his Protestant religion, although he had served, in his long, varied, international military career, Protestant and Catholic masters alike. In old age, Schomberg had lost some of his military genius, and William came to Ireland with reinforcements in 1690 to finish the campaign, as he felt that the general's indecisiveness, since he had landed near Carrickfergus in the summer of 1689, had left his (William's) rear flank exposed. For William, the main theatre of the war against Louis remained on the Continent, and all his decisions bear witness to this pre-occupation.

By the summer of 1688, William had formed a European Protestant and Catholic alliance against France, and for its complete encirclement he needed the three Stuart kingdoms. To help forge his grand scheme against Louis, William went to England in 1688 and to Ireland two years later. This strategy does not diminish the importance of the Glorious Revolution in Britain and the Williamite wars in Ireland.

The strategy also serves to place William's Irish campaign of 1690, including the siege of Limerick in that year, in the context of a European war which was fought from the Shannon's Atlantic shores, over the Low Countries, the German Rhineland, Northern Italy to the Hungarian plains. The wars of the later 17th century were a renewal of the wars which had started in the early 16th century, with their mixture of religious (not only in Christendom itself with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, but also between Christian and Islam), dynastic and political aspects.

As 17th century battles go, the Boyne was not a major conflict, although William's secretary, Constantijn Huygens Jr., commented how the undisciplined English soldiery (unlike the Dutch, Danish, German and Huguenot regiments, the English ones were newly raised) hated the Irish and massacred and plundered Jacobite stragglers and camp-followers. It is estimated that the Williamite losses were about 500, including Schomberg, while Jacobite losses were 2,000. General de Ginkel wrote to his father that it had been a great victory which would bring much satisfaction to the allies.

Shortly after William's victory at the Boyne, parts of his army were sent off in different directions in pursuit of the Jacobite forces which had been scattered after James's hasty departure from Kinsale. General Douglas was sent to Athlone, but he missed the siege artillery to take the town, and other units acted as a vanguard for the bulk of the Williamite army on its march to the south coast to secure a safe passage back to England. In his camp at Finglas, William had received the news of two serious defeats close to home and he was very anxious to return as quickly as possible to England and the Netherlands to re-assure the home front.

In the southern low countries at Fleurus, Prince Waldeck had lost about 13,000 Dutch troops, and a direct French attack on the United Provinces seemed imminent. William wrote to Raadspensionaris Heinsius, who, in the absence of the Stadtholder, performed the role of acting head of government of the Dutch Republic, that Waldeck's defeat had undone the satisfaction he felt about his own victory. This was followed by the Anglo-Dutch naval defeat at Beachy Head, which could have opened the way to a Jacobite invasion at Torbay.

The naval defeat led to severe recriminations between the Dutch and English, and these were not without reason, for the English admiral, Herbert, Count Torrington, who commanded the combined fleets, was accused of not having helped the Dutch admiral, Cornelis Evertsen, when he attacked the French. As the Dutch fleet had been paid for by the Province of Holland, Heinsius wrote to William that it had led to immense consternation and to doubts about the English as reliable allies.

As King William marched off in a southerly direction from Dublin, he was not sure of what to do. He felt that he had to return to England and the Dutch Republic to re-assure the home fronts in both countries and to mend Anglo-Dutch relations. He also wanted to be closer to the theatre of war on the European mainland, and for this reason he had already sent substantial parts of his army back to England. He also sent to England his premier private secretary, Constantijn Huygens, to keep an eye on what was

happening in London and to re-assure the queen. Historians have cause to regret this decision, as Huygens' diary is a valuable eye-witness account of the Williamite campaign, especially from a Dutch perspective. Huygens has interesting comments on events and people in south Leinster and east Munster: 'Carrick, typical Irish village, poor and dirty ... the women are reasonable pretty ... meat and fish are of good quality but ruined by the way they are cooked ... a typically Irish drizzle'.

In early August, William apparently changed his mind, as the imminent French danger off the English and Dutch coasts faded, and the Jacobite forces in the south-east of Ireland also melted away, but held their positions along the Shannon. He decided that he had time to take Limerick, the main Jacobite stronghold, by force.

But William's efforts were to be in vain. With the failure of the siege of Limerick, he decided to contain the Jacobites west of the Shannon until the next year, while he returned to England to pay more attention to affairs there. He had more than enough

to occupy his mind; Austrian setbacks against the Turks; difficulties in Lorraine and Savoy, where the German and Swiss Protestant allies seemed slow to act. The year 1690 was therefore, one of mixed results for William.

For Further Reading

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Kings in Conflict: Ireland in the 1690s, Belfast, 1990, (Ulster Museum).
Kings in Conflict: The Revolutionary Wars in Ireland and its Aftermath, 1689-1750, W.A. Maguire (ed.), Belfast, 1990.
History Today, Section on '1688 and the Historians', Vol. 38, July, 1989.
History Today, Vol. 35, May, 1985, on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the Huguenot diaspora.
The Irish Sword, Vol. XIII, Winter, 1977, No. 51, 'Dutch Sources for the Williamite Campaign in Ireland', by W. Troost.
The Embarrassment of Riches by Simon Schama, London, 1987.

TWO LETTERS FROM WILLIAM TO ANTHONIE HEINSIUS, GRAND PENSIONER OF THE ESTATES GENERAL.

Near Dublin, 31 July/10 August, 1690.

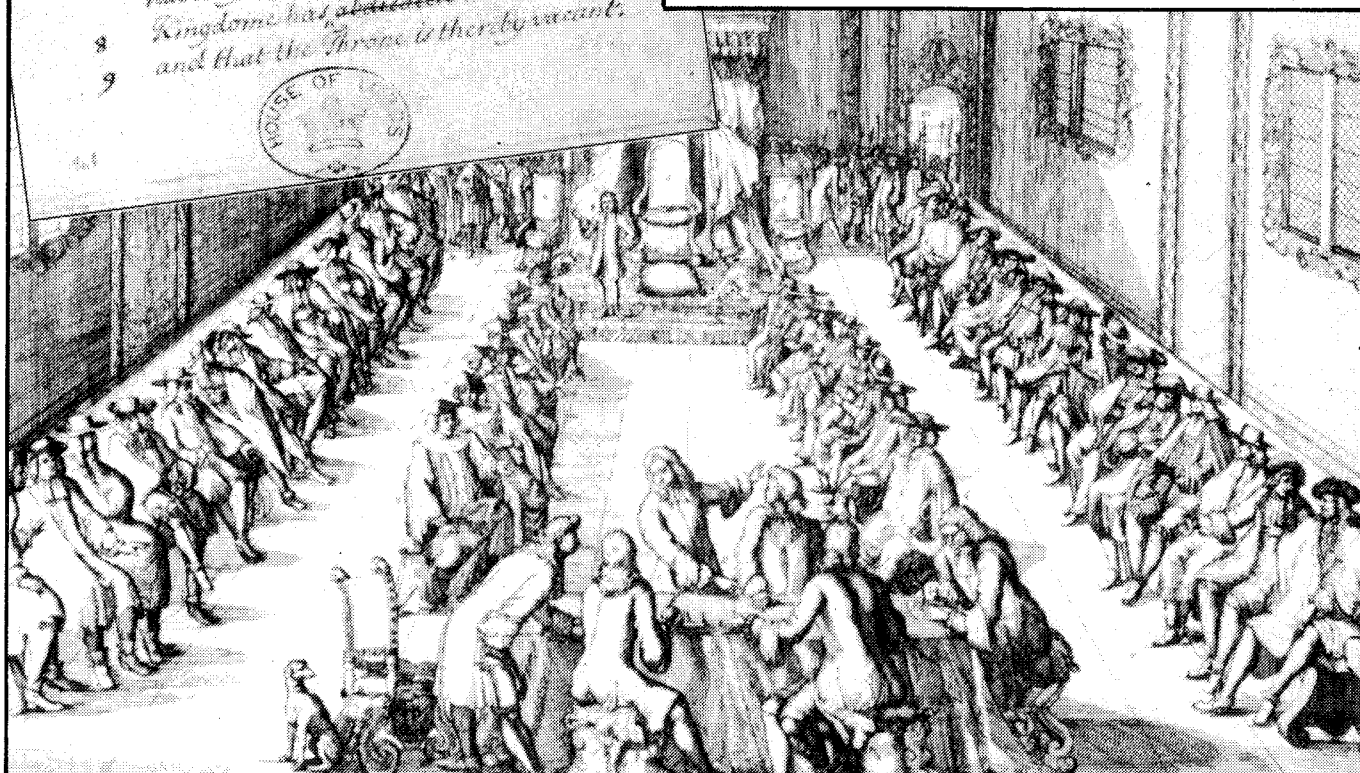
I had returned here planning to go back to England, because there had been fears of a French landing, but as that fear has lessened, although the enemy fleet is still off Torbay, I have decided to join the army on its way to Limerick, as my presence is needed. I have already sent back to England a considerable number of dragoons and foot, and I hope, with God's help, to join them within a fortnight, as it is my intention to stay with the army only until we have taken a passage over the river Shannon, behind which the enemy is hiding; I will leave the siege of Limerick to Count van Solms. I have received all your honour's dispatches, the last dated the 28th July. I am pleased to see that the disasters over there can be countered. God will certainly give His blessing to a favourable outcome to this heavy war. The Province of Vriesland is not co-operating, they are not contributing to the common expense. They must be brought to reason, otherwise it will mean the end of the Union [the Confederation of the Dutch Republic]. I hope to have the opportunity to talk with you in person about this matter next October, when I hope to be back in The Hague, with God's help. I am looking forward to my return.

Your good friend, William R.

Postscript: I believe there will not be an attack on Holland and Zeeland, therefore I recommend that [the militia] of the people be sent home from the countryside and the burghers to the towns, as to pay them further would cause problems, as it is very expensive to keep them.

The 'Convention' Parliament, whose meeting in early 1689 offered the crown to William and Mary. Both its status and the declaration (inset) that James had 'vacated' the throne were decidedly ambiguous.

Resolved & C^o 28th Aug 1688
 That King James the second having
 endeavoured to subvert the Constitution of
 the Kingdom by breaking the Original Contract
 between King and People, and by the Advice
 of Jesuits and other wicked persons having
 violated the fundamentall Lawes and
 having withdrawn himselfe out of this
 Kingdom has ~~abdicated~~ the Government
 and that the Throne is then by vacant.





With the army near Limerick, 14/20 August, 1690.

I am at present so engaged here, that I can only say briefly that I shall have to stay here with the army longer than I had intended, because of an unlucky accident, which your honour shall hear about from others. I received yesterday your honour's last letter of 8 August. I am very pleased to learn of the alertness being employed in expanding the fleet.

Your honour can in my name assure the gentlemen of Amsterdam a Hollander shall command the state fleet, but just now it is impossible to remove Everse. The tardiness of the operations by the Germans is intolerable, and there is therefore nothing to be expected from this campaign.

I remain always, your honour's good friend, William R.

(Archives ou correspondance inédite de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, series 3, Vol. 1, letters 74 and 75).

(Translation courtesy of Denis O'Leary, Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands).

Pamphlet: Ireland Rescued and Delivered by ... William III, King of Great Britain . . . His trip to Ireland is extensively described, how cities and castles went over to him and what way the country was brought into obedience without much bloodshed. The flight of the former king to France for the second time; the return of the king on the 20th of September 1690. *Veni, vidi, vici*. Accurately from authentic evidence and reports written by a lover of history. Decorated with pictures of the sieges of the important cities and other actions.

(Amsterdam, Jan ten Hoorn, Book-seller, Oude Heere Logement, 1690).

After Waterford and Duncannon fort had been taken by General Kirk, the king decided to besiege Limerick, as the bulk of the remaining enemy force had been concentrated there. General-Lieutenant Douglas has been ordered by the king to join Count van Solms. In Ireland there was no resistance left except at Athlone, Galway and Limerick, which would now be attacked by the king. **On the [17] 27th of August**, the king opened the attack with seven battalions at the trenches, under the command of the Prince of Würtemberg, Lieutenant-General Kirk, Major-General Tettau and Sir Henry Bellasis. They advanced 300 paces and took two outposts, from which the enemy could fire with their cannon on our workers. **On the [18] 28th**, these troops were relieved by those under Lieutenant-General Douglas, Milford Sidney, Major-General the Count van Nassau and Brigadier Stuart, and approached very close to another outpost, where the enemy was strong. **On the [19] 29th** these troops were relieved by those of the Prince of Würtemberg, who closed in on the outpost.

On the [20] 30th at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the king gave the order to attack it with 150 men, and, with the loss of 40, it was taken. Within half an hour the Irish counter-



The Duke of Schomberg.

attacked with a large force of 2000, but the king's cavalry repelled their horse and foot.

The day before, four trumpeters and a quartermaster of Sarsfield's regiment, but Protestants, deserted to us and told us that Sarsfield was in Co. Clare with 300 men and had sent his foot to Galway, and that the Earl of Tyrconnell and the Duke of Berwick had also gone to Galway. **On the [21] 31st**, the army carried on the trenches in order to prevent the enemy mounting sorties from that side.

On the [22 August] 1st of September a battery was erected against the side of a tower from which the enemy fired heavily on us. We knocked that tower, and the next night shells and firebombs were fired into the city, which burnt down some houses. We continued on the **[23 August] 2nd**, and, as fire-bombs fell on the hay arsenal, it burnt down, together with some houses.

On the [24 August] 3rd all the English batteries, with 30 pieces or ordnance, were ready, and on the **[25 August] 4th** the trenches advanced to within 30 paces of the ditch, and, although the enemy attacked in strength, and losses were as many as 200 men inside and 100 outside, including Captains Brown, Lucy and Mackenson, the work continued. **On [26 August] 5th** as a result of continuous firing, the breach was enlarged and their countescarp suffered heavily.

On the [27 August] 6th the king ordered the countescarp to be attacked, and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon a party of grenadiers with the support of some other companies began the assault. They fought with such great courage that, having taken the countescarp and a fort, which the enemy had erected on the glacis of the wall, they did not halt there as was ordered, but instead

followed the fleeing Irish through the breach into the city. The Irish stopped the attack with cannon-fire of grape-shot, and confusion followed.

The fighting lasted for three hours, during which the Irish continued to bring in fresh troops, and they exploded a number of mines in the ditch, without much effect. Finally, we were ordered to return to our trenches, as we had failed to maintain the lodgement. We cannot say how many we lost during this attack, but up to this we lost between 400 and 500 men during the siege. Last night the English advanced to within 50 paces from the ditch. In the afternoon the breach was enlarged and all preparations were made for a frontal attack. Deserters from the city said that the enemy had incurred losses of 1400 men, which seems to be too many, and that our artillery had caused much damage in the city. Lieutenant-General Ginkel had 3 or 4 nights before taken without warning a castle [Nenagh], garrisoned with 80 men, not more than two miles from here. In retaliation the Irish burnt down the mansion of the Earl of Thomond, and have done much mischief in the surrounding countryside. Sarsfield went off in the direction of Galway, which the French have succeeded in entering, having been before shut out.

Meanwhile the king having deemed it expedient, on account of the bad weather, to raise his army from in front of Limerick, the artillery and heavy baggage withdrew on **[30 August] 9 September**. On the following days, the army broke camp and marched in good order to Clonmel, without being in the least troubled by the enemy. From there a large detachment was sent to Cork and another to Kinsale. His majesty nominated Viscount Sidney and Mister Thomas Coningsby, Esq., Lords' Justices of Ireland and then left for Duncannon, where he went on board ship on the **[5] 15th** and arrived the **[6] 6th** at Kingsroad, near Bristol, with 3 yachts, 2 warships and a few transport vessels ... and on the **[9] 19th** at Windsor ...

Meanwhile ... in order to oppress Limerick somewhat more, his majesty ordered forts to be built on the River Shannon above and below the city, the one to cut communications from the sea, the other to do the same from Athlone.

The damage done to the English by Colonel Sarsfield, added to the strike on the English convoy, as a result of which about 14 days passed before the army was provided with other cannon, was held to be one of the principal reasons why Limerick had held out until this time. Meanwhile it is reckoned that the king since his arrival in Ireland, through sickness or otherwise, had lost not above twelve hundred men, which is quite few, as the officers killed have been included in the figure.

Journal of Constantijn Huygens, the son, from 21 October 1688 to 2 September 1696. Volume I (Utrecht, 1876).

Saturday [19] 29 July: Our cavalry took Clonmel. As this place, on the river Suir, lies

between Waterford and Limerick, communication between those cities has been broken. The Papists of Waterford want to negotiate about a surrender.

Thursday [24 July] 3 August: After the capitulation of Waterford the king is said to return to England. After the king had gone to Waterford, he mentioned that he would join the army going to Limerick.

Sunday night [27 July] 6 August: Major-General Douglas had to withdraw from Athlone because he had not enough men to attack the heavily defended town from both sides of the river. The French fleet had not attempted a landing in England. Firstly the king had to go to Dublin to arrange some matters, such as the delivery of heavy artillery.

Wednesday [30 July] 9 August: The King told me to go to London, while he himself would go to Limerick taking de Wilde, [another secretary] with him. French fleet still off Torbay.

Tuesday [19] 22 August [London]: Received letters from de Wilde of the [8] 18th and [9] 19th ... telling that the enemy had left the river and that our units (including Oyen with his brigade) had crossed it; that some (including a deserter) had said that the French had returned to Limerick; that the king had sent a trumpeter to the city to ask for its surrender, but that the commander had answered that he would not, and had given the trumpeter a guinea to drink the health of the Prince of Orange. He further wrote that the great cannon was expected on the [10] 20th or [11] 21st and that surrender was imminent.

Friday [22 August] 1 September: In the late afternoon Rooseboom [another secretary who had been with Huygens in Ireland] reported the news that Sarsfield had attacked and defeated the companies of horse which had been protecting the siege train convoy, not far from our army; had killed most of them; burnt all the powder and wagons, and destroyed two pieces of ordnance.

De Wilde wrote that an Irish soldier of the garrison of a castle near Limerick [Castleconnell], which had surrendered, had said the commander who surrendered such a place should be hanged; Major-General Kirk had made him stand with a noose round his neck until all the garrison had marched passed him and then had hanged him.

Wednesday [27 August] 6th: According to the wife of Captain Villars, a Papist, letters had arrived in Chester which said that the 'half-moon', as they call it locally, of Limerick had been taken and that they had offered the capitulation of the city, but that they had received a bad answer [no quarter] from Major-General Kirk.

Friday [29 August] 8th: No news from Holland and Ireland, only according to La Fontaine, house-steward of the Count von Darmstadt, a Papist, one of the king's footmen had said that his master had died in Limerick.

Tuesday [2] 12th: Heard that the queen had received letters from Ireland, but not very good news. According to an express letter sent from the army last Thursday, the following day



Hans Willem Bentinck, first Earl of Portland (1649-1709), after Hyacinth Rigaud (1659-1743). U.K. National Trust.

the city would be attacked through the breach which the cannon had made.

Wednesday [3] 13th: After dinner, Rooseboom brought the news that the attack had been made on Limerick through the breach, but that it had been repelled. Also, Portland had written to van Nyenhuis' wife that, because of the continuous rain, it was feared that the siege would have to be raised. Nyenhuis had received a light wound. At night, Silvius [another Dutchman] came and said that it had not been a direct assault, but that after our men had taken the counterscarp near the breach without difficulty, they entered the city, but, as they did not receive reinforcements, they had been repelled.

Sunday [7] 17th: My lady Charlotte van Beeverweert told me that the king had boarded a ship at Waterford, and would arrive the next day at Kensington, but that all was not over at Limerick.

Wednesday [10] 20th: The king arrived back in London. According to the Spanish Ambassador Don Pedro Ronquillo an action near Limerick had gone in our favour after the king's departure.

Thursday [11] 21st: De Wilde told me this morning that he was at Limerick after the [28 August] 7th, and was on the retreat, and said

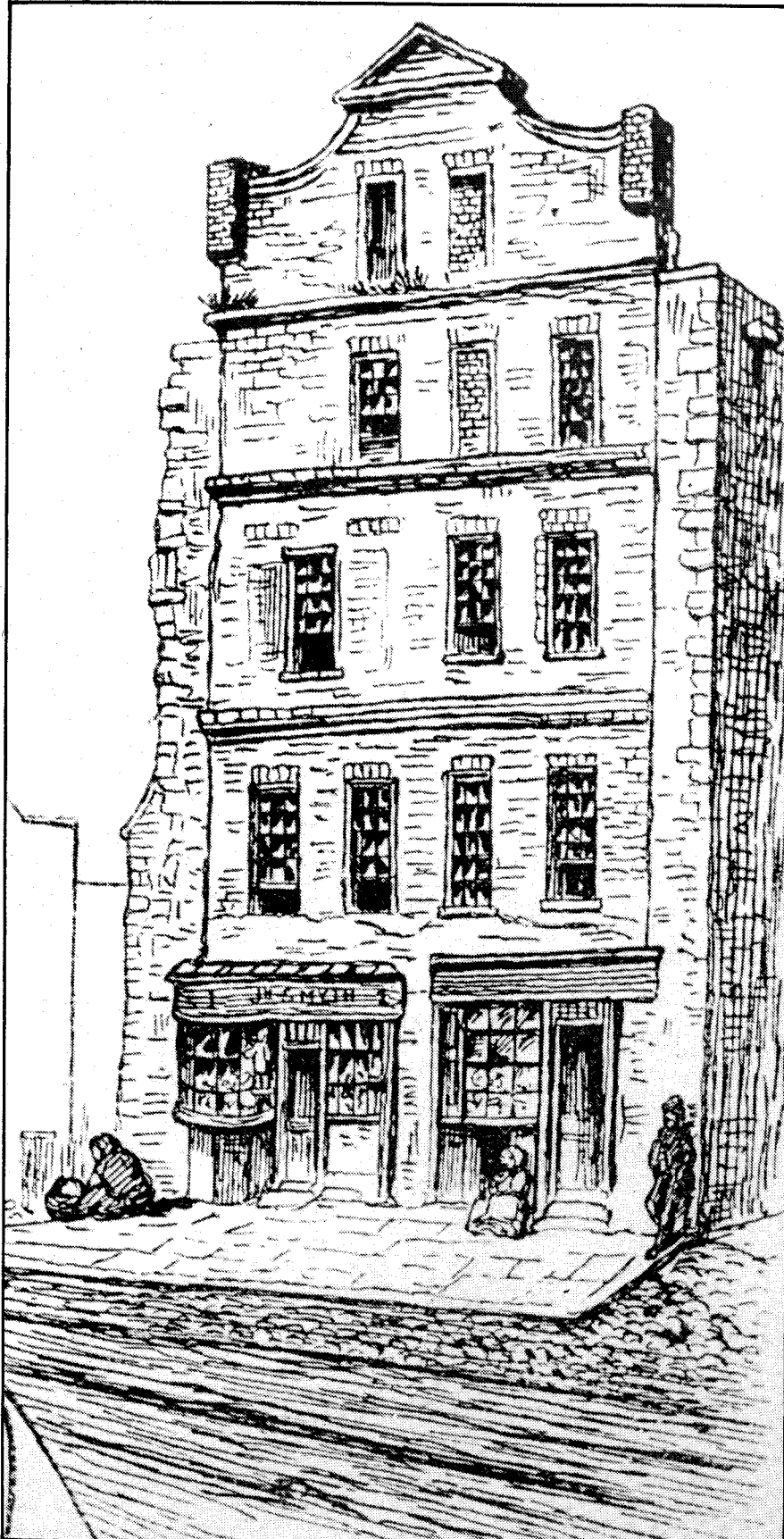
that the main reason for breaking the siege was the lack of ammunition, but that it was not allowed to say it.

Friday [12] 22nd: The king wanted me at Kensington to write to the Estates-General; he would go to the Republic after he had settled his affairs in London. I also had to write to the Prince van Waldeck saying that the reasons for breaking the siege of Limerick were the continuous bad weather, the loss of men during the attack through the breach, and that the city could still have been taken if they had made the necessary preparations. But the king did not mention the loss of powder and ammunition due to the enemy's attack on the siege train; further, that Cork and Kinsale had been taken and that he would go to Holland in November. Concluding that, as had not been God's will to finish the work, one had to be patient.

Extract from a letter from William III to the Prince of Waldeck, written at Kensington [12] 22 September 1690 [enclosed with his letter of the same date to Heinsius]

Situation in Ireland

I arrived the day before yesterday in good health from Ireland, having left the army at



Seventeenth century Dutch-gabled house in the Great (now Nicholas) Street, King's Island.

Limerick about 15 days ago. I decided to raise the siege there because of the early onset of the season, and with the rain continuing, it would have been impossible to take the place

and, if it had been necessary, to withdraw, especially the heavy artillery. As well, having omitted to secure those places which we had taken, through the excessive enthusiasm of

our troops, who would have taken even the city by assault, if one had ordered that, because the breach was found to be better than believed and the enemy was in retreat there when our men chased them from the covered and curved way, so that they followed them and did not obey at all the order given to them to clear the covered way and to instal themselves there without going any further. And when they reached the breach they did not push ahead, finding some dangerous retrenchment which the besieged had made, so that those who passed it, even some of our officers and soldiers, were taken prisoner in the city. All this, as you can judge, caused much confusion and impeded the installation, and led to the death and wounding of many men to no good purpose. This misfortune had of necessity to delay the siege, and lacking various items which we needed, I believed the safest course was not to continue further, since the outcome depended on the good or bad weather. The reason which had obliged me to attack this place (even though it had such a strong garrison, having the majority of the enemy infantry who, according to the evidence of all those who deserted the city, exceeded twelve thousand men) was that, by capturing this place, I would complete the conquest of Ireland, and the other places would fall of their own accord. If, on the other hand, in taking the others, such as Cork and Kinsale, something which I could easily have done, the enemy could always maintain itself for the winter in the province of Connaught, in Limerick, Athlone, Galway and Sligo. Indeed they could do so now, and the worst of it is the frustration at not having been able to achieve what one set out to do, that which would have succeeded without fail were it not for the little misfortunes which may not be written. But the good God did not wish it, indeed one must be patient and there is enough to thank Him for the great victories which he has given me, more than I could have anticipated, even if I were unable to bring to an end an undertaking which would have put me in a condition to help my friends with greater strength across the sea, which was the principal reason why I risked more than I would otherwise have done. I hope however that this winter I can put Irish affairs in such a condition that my presence will not be required at all in the forthcoming campaign.

And that I would have enough means to assist the allies with greater strength than I have been able to exert hitherto, and to cross the sea myself so that in November I hope to orally explain to you, at which time I intend to be in Holland, it being impossible for me to come any earlier, for the reason that Parliament can begin its session only at the start of October.

(Archives ou correspondance inédite de la Maison d'Orange – Nassau, Series 3, Vol. 1, pp. 87-89).

(Translation courtesy of Denis O'Leary, Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands).