Galloping Hogan comes riding down the highway of Irish history with a cluster of heroic and romantic references pinned on his rapproee's hat. Those references are plucked from poems, ballads, stories, schoolbooks and songs.

What has he done to deserve such accolades? After all, very few individuals are accorded such honour by posterity. Hogan was only a minor figure, and a shadowy one at that, in Sarsfield's ambush of the Williamite siege train at Ballyneety in August 1690. Many of the academic accounts of those events make no reference whatever to Hogan. It is difficult to distinguish historical truth from traditional assertion, and what follows doesn't attempt to perform that task. So what does follow? It's quite simply a montage of words taken from various sources; a montage which tells of the Ballyneety ambush, with the use of poetic licence here and there, and also some curious fictional portraits of Hogan.

Silent the skies over Limerick Town,
Broken the walls once scarred by war,
Jacobite sword and Williamite crown
One with yesterday's causes are; (1)

By Limerick's walls I thunder down with
a cannon's stormy rattle,
Chanting the rune of a fighting tune where
Sarsfield stood to battle.
To the thudding of Galloping Hogan's steed,
Of Wild Geese flown, and a cause undone till
a new day's word be spoken. (2)

From the Boyne it was an easy march for William into Dublin and Ulster and Leinster fell into his hands ...
The Irish army fell back across the Shannon ... and
the main army took up its stand at Limerick ... (3)

It was the 10th August, 1690, when William had advanced upon Limerick, forced the Irish outposts back to the city, erected his cannon on Ireton's fort, and opened fire on the walls. That evening he had summoned Limerick to surrender. (4)

A French deserter from William's camp having made his way into the city, gave information of the state of the Williamite artillery, which had not as yet come up in full force, but which was on its way from Waterford. The deserter said that the artillery, &c., were on their way under an escort of a few troops of Villier's horse. And no doubt they were on the road from Cashel. And now having called together his faithful staff, Sarsfield made every preparation to prevent the advance of the approaching train. (5)

Oh! Limerick is in danger and old Ireland is not free,
So Sarsfield sends a message to a fearless rapparee
"Come ride across the Shannon at the sounding of the drum;
And we'll blow the enemy siege-train to the land of kingdom come". (6)

Hear you those ghostly hoof-beats ring
Down the valley and up the height!
Is it for Sarsfield or the king
Galloping Hogan rides to-night? (7)

He was thoroughly aware of the advantages to be obtained by the presence, in the expedition, of “Galloping” Hogan, a well educated, popular man, and a brave rapparee Hogan knew every pass and defile - was familiar with every track and roadway - with every ford and bog - and in a critical juncture like the present, was the last man that could be obtained to give effectual assistance to the grand exploit of the dashing, dauntless Irish general. (8)

Owing to the state of the roads, which in many places
were little more than ill-defined tracks, progress was always quicker on horseback than by a carriage of any kind. (9).

Ho! Galloping Hogan, Galloping Hogan,
Galloping all along,
On his saddle is a sabre,
On his lips there is a song. (10).

It requires something of an effort to-day, especially to the younger generation, to realise the importance of the horse in the everyday life of the seventeenth century, and indeed of the eighteenth and early nineteenth also. Then to be able to ride a horse was as much a matter of course as it is to be able to ride a bicycle to-day. Not only men, but women also, except those in the lowest station of life who seldom if ever had occasion to leave their own cabins, were more or less at home in the saddle. (11).

The Raparee is bearded, there's a twinkle in his eye.
As he rides into the city how the Limerick ladies cry?
"Mister Outlaw, Mister Outlaw,
won't you tarry here with me..." (12)

SENTRY OFFICER:
"Mr. Hogan has just turned up, sir. May I usher him here?"

SARSFIELD:
"Oh! yes"
(Officer salutes again and leaves. Enter Hogan in mud-bespattered garments, face flushed with excitement).

SARSFIELD:
(AND SHAKING HIS HAND HEARTILY)
"Welcome again to old Limerick, Prince of Raparees. I was about to ask you news of the outer world, but the fire-flashes which I see shooting from the corners of your keen grey eyes, plainly tell me that your news is satisfactory, and that you are the herald of pleasant sword-slaughtering exercises for my cooped-up troops - an exercise they badly need. Your breaches, too, exhibit more than usual signs of a late hard ride, proving that you have been well maintaining your right to be known as the 'Galloper'."

HOGAN:
"As usual, General, you guess rightly. But, tare an fire-from your keen grey eyes, plainly tell me that your news is satisfactory, and that you are the herald of pleasant sword-slaughtering exercises for my cooped-up troops - an exercise they badly need. Your breaches, too, exhibit more than usual signs of a late hard ride, proving that you have been well maintaining your right to be known as the 'Galloper'."

SARSFIELD:
"What further news have you now of the travelling battery?"

HOGAN:
"Further news, you ask. Great heavens above! It is within twelve miles of ye, and I myself saw it last evening encamped near Ballyneety Castle".

SARSFIELD:
"This is rather exciting tidings, Galloper".

HOGAN:
"Faith! ye may well say so. Perhaps, it will astonish you a trifle more, when I tell ye that this battery is only guarded by two companies of dragoons... By the cross of Mungrath! (RISING FROM HIS CHAIR HIS BODY SWAYING WITH EXCITEMENT, AND A FLOOD OF FIRE SHOOTING FROM HIS EYES) with 500 of your troopers ye should be able to cut them up into ribbons, and blow their guns and ammunition into as many pieces as there were stars last night when I rode here. But ye would have to start this very night. This is all, sir, and I leave the rest in your hands, and, by all the goats in Kerry, I know no better ones to entrust them to." (15)

Sarsfield was in charge of the Irish cavalry at Limerick. A brilliant cavalry general, he had trained under a great master, Turenne, in France. He decided to intercept and destroy the siege train. At dusk, on the night of Sunday, 10th August, with six hundred men, he rode out from Limerick... (16)

A fine harvest moon lent light to the landscape. He could not venture over O'Brien's Bridge; for that old pass between Clare and Tipperary, was jealously guarded by the soldiers of William, prepared to meet any attack that might be made upon them. The cavaliers passed through Bridgetown and Ballycorney, the Shannon being all the time on their right. (17)

The night we rode with Sarsfield out from Limerick to meet the waggon-train that William hoped would help in our defeat. We could not venture over O'Brien's Bridge; for that old pass between Clare and Tipperary, was jealously guarded by the soldiers of William, prepared to meet any attack that might be made upon them. The cavaliers passed through Bridgetown and Ballycorney, the Shannon being all the time on their right. (17)

Sarsfield rode out the Dutch to rout, And to take and break their cannon; To Mass went he at half-past three, And at four he crossed the Shannon. (19)

'Twas silently we left the town, And silently we rode,
While o'er our heads the silent stars
in silver beauty glowed.
And silently and stealthily,
well led by one who knew,
We crossed the shining Shannon
at the ford of Killaloe.
The galloping O'Hogan, Ireland's
fiery-hearted son,
Twas he by many a byway led us
confidently on. (20)

Having gone up beyond the bridge, they crossed the
ford between the Pier Head and Ballyvalley. This was one
of the only two fords which were on the Shannon, about
Killaloe at this period. The party then proceeded across
the country between Ballina and Boher, coming out on
the Boher road, near Labadhy Bridge. When at this
bridge, the party, who were conducted by Galloping
Hogan, was startled by a curious incident. Sarsfield dis-
covered, near Labadhy Bridge, a number of men on his
left, whose presence excited alarm. He ordered the horse
to halt, apprehensive that he had been betrayed by
Hogan. But the delusion was dispelled in an instant; the

SARSFIELD:
(MUSING). What a deuced clever fellow Hogan is, only
needing a little more education blended judiciously with
ambition to rise to almost anything in defence of his King.
If this expedition succeeds, and I do not see why it should
not, he will far out-run me in its honours. He is welcome
to them, and best deserves them. (22)

They encamped for the remaining three hours of the,
August night on the side of the Keeper Mountain. A man
named O'Ryan offered Sarsfield shelter in his cottage, but
the soldier preferred to sleep, wrapped in his cloak, on the
sweet grass.

During the next day, Sarsfield and his troop lurked by
the mountain. The weather was fair, but cloudy, the
solitude undisturbed. (23)

The night fell dark on Limerick
and everything was still
As for the foe in ambush we lay
beside the hill
Like lions we waited boldly to
dash upon our prey
With gallant Sarsfield at our head
by the dawning of the day. (24)

On the following morning divettes were sent to watch
the advance of the expected artillery train of William, and
to report progress. In a short time it was intimated to
Sarsfield that the guns and ammunition were on their
way to Limerick, and that the English forces were to en-
camp for the night near the hill of Ballyneety, a
remarkable conical eminence which may be seen from a
great distance, somewhat near Derk. Sarsfield went next
night and arriving near the hill, he halted. And here lay a
principal difficulty, namely, how to discover the
watchword of the Williamites. (25)

One of the men's horses cast a shoe, and the soldier
was obliged to fall behind and walk the animal. He met
with a woman on her way to Ballyneety, and they got into
conversation. She told him she was the wife of a
Williamite soldier, and was rejoining her husband, who
was among the escort. She further told him the
password. (26)

"I have got their password. You'll smile to hear it. It is
'Sarsfield'."

The two Irishmen looked at each other and laughed.

The convoy lay asleep under their guns, their horses
were at rest; the encampment was still as death; no
danger appeared; all were in imaginary security, free from
the slightest suspicion of the blows that were about com-
ing thick and heavy upon them.

It was moonlight, with occasionally flitting clouds. No
time was lost in making everything ready. When the
clouds gathered heavily for a few moments, Sarsfield, at
the head of his men, accompanied by Galloping Hogan,
cautiously proceeded down the hill. As the first sentinel
was approached, the challenge was given, and was
replied to by the watchword "Sarsfield". (29)

"Halt! Who goes there?" the sentry
cried, "Advance and give the word!"
"The word is Sarsfield", cried our Chief,
"and stop us he who can,
For Sarsfield is the word to-night
and Sarsfield is the man!" (30)
I have not discovered the origin of the story that the Williamite password for the night was "Sarsfield", which gave him the opportunity of saying "Sarsfield is the word and Sarsfield is the man". (31)

And with that word upon our lips we'll pass the sentries through
Then when you hear my voice upraised charge boldly one and all -
No cannon from this convoy e'er must bark at Limerick's wall! (32)

They asked us for the password
"Brave Sarsfield is the man!"
"And here I am" our general cried, as down on them he ran
For God had cleared the firmament - the moon and stars gave light
And for the Battle of the Boyne we were revenged that night. (33)

"Charge!" Sarsfield cried: and the green hillside
As they charged replied in thunder: They rode o'er the plain, and they rode o'er the slain, And the rebel rout lay under. (34)

Scarcely any resistance was offered. The men were sabred and shot to death where they lay. Then Sarsfield had their cannon loaded to the muzzle, sunk in the earth and discharged, with an explosion which was heard even in the city itself. (35)

One bursting cheer, one headlong charge, and sabres bright and keen Are hacking at the foeman's head where 'er a head is seen
The Colonel leaves his wig behind, he straddles a horse and flies
To tell of Sarsfield's daring and the convoy camp's surprise.
We make a pile of captured guns and powder bags and stores; Then skyward in one flaming blast the great explosion roars. (36)

"'Tis a bonfire they'll see in Singland camp", cried O'Hogan with joy.
The Irish, implicitly obeying Sarsfield as he rode here and there giving directions, worked with speed and skill; the rapparees were as cool and adroit as the trained soldiers; though their haste was extreme they bungled nothing. The train of powder was lit; the Irish drew back; the whole night seemed to break into noise and flame as the burst guns, like monsters in quick death agony, sprang into the reddened air. The deep roar of the explosion, the shuddering of the earth, the long jets of flame that licked all whiteness from the moonlight, shrieks and lamentations that seemed inhuman yet surely a vision of unreality; Sarsfield, the tall man on the heavy horse, hatless, his hair blown back, his eyes wide open, his features strained with exultation and stained crimson from the glare, looked monstrous on his dark hilllock. (37) It was an enterprise of skilful timing and swift execution, which was highly damaging to the enemy. (38)

He burned the gear the knaves held dear - For his king he fought, not plunder; With powder he crammed the guns and rammed Their mouths the red soil under.
The spark flashed out - like a nation's shout The sound into heaven ascended; The hosts of the sky to earth made reply. And the thunders twain were blended. (39)

Most of the 100 wagons of the convoy were burned and with them 12,000 pounds of powder and a great quantity of match and grenades. Carters and horses were ruthlessly cut down. The carters' wives and children were said to have been among the victims. (40) The Irish brought away with them four thousand draught horses and a hundred chargers of Colonel Villier's regiment, which were saddled, bridled and had pistols at their holsters. (41) The Dutch company ordered out to lead in the convoy started late. They were only about a mile from Ballyneety, where the siege train had encamped, when the night was brilliantly lighted up by an explosion that seemed to rend the earth.

Furiously spurring their rearing horses, they reached the burning remains of the convoy to find that the Jacobites had gone. They pursued for some distance, but believing capture impossible that way, wheeled westward to cut Sarsfield off before he could again cross the Shannon. (42)

Knowing that William would adopt every stratagem to prevent his return to the besieged city, he went back to Limerick by Banagher, where he crossed the bridge, one of the arches of which he blew up, in order to stop pursuit of the English horse, which were close upon him. (43) Major James Fitzgerald and fifteen others were killed by Sir Albert Cunningham's Dragoons, in their pursuit of the returning Irish. (44)

The darkness, however, was all against the pursuers, who did not know the country as Galloping Hogan knew it. They failed to catch up with the Jacobites, and disconsolately returned to camp next morning. (45) Galloping Hogan rode beside Sarsfield as they galloped along by the shore of Lough Derg. The moon showed the rapparee's bare arms and his face which was set in a smile of intense satisfaction. (46) Sarsfield's ride is his most celebrated exploit. It caused an international sensation at the time and its memory is still preserved in a number of local traditions. (47)

Nothing could equal the intense joy and satisfaction with which the garrison within the walls heard of this signal advantage. According to King James's memoirs "the garrison was hugely encouraged" - and when Sarsfield safely returned with his brave band of faithful rapparees and Dragoons, the rejoicings that ensued chased away every apprehension, and everyone felt con-
fident of success in the issue of the siege. (48)

To the heroes of Limerick, the City of the Fights
Be my best blessing borne on the wings of the air!
We had card-playing there o'er our camp-fires at night,
And the Word of Life, too, and prayers. (49)

An amnesty was proclaimed in a short time, of which Galloping Hogan is stated by Storey to have taken advantage, adding that he was murdered near Roscrea soon afterwards by certain rapparees who had not submitted. (50)

So to-night along the Shannon by the pale light of the moon There comes an eerie brightness as of an Indian noon, Then clipperty clop resounding through the lattice of the shade The ghost of Galloping Hogan goes a-riding down the glade. (51)

Craven James in ashes and dust, Throne forgotten and dreams laid by, Sarsfield, keeper of Erin's trust, Lies in his grave under Belgium's sky. (52)

But with thundering hoof-beats fierce and fleet Night by night till the edge of dawn, By the lonely valley and hill retreat Galloping Hogan still rides on. (53)

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The women of Limerick in action in 1690.