

# LIMERICK AND FRANCE DURING THE JACOBITE WAR OF 1689-1691

**PART TWO\* BY SHEILA MULLOY**

**T**he battle of the Boyne took place on 11 July, 1690 (New Style),<sup>(1)</sup> and two days later saw the entry of Williamite troops into Dublin Castle. Possession of the capital city had by then passed out of Jacobite hands, and with its loss it was considered by the French commanders that Ireland was lost. The first news filtering back to France was received in court with consternation. The honour of the French troops was at stake, and with it the honour of Louis XIV, the personification of France. Versailles awaited with bated breath the return of James II and his fellow-travellers, and the letters from the commanding officers still remaining in Ireland.<sup>(2)</sup>

James had hurried back to France with unseemly haste. To everyone's surprise, he did not seem at all put out by his misfortunes when he eventually arrived at court, and Louis, always the perfect host, received him most graciously. The French courtiers felt sorry for him, but were amazed at his lack of spirit, a quality which they admired in his young wife, Mary of Modena. James blamed the cowardice of the Irish for his defeat at the Boyne, and Ireland never entered into his future plans for the recovery of his throne.

Lieutenant-General Girardin-Léry accompanied James to France, and was the first of the French officers to report directly on the battle to the French court. His report was followed quickly by letters from Limerick written by the French commander, the Comte de Lauzun, Lieutenant-General de la Hoguette, artillery commander Laisné, Major-General Boisseleau, Brigadiers Famechon and Zurlauben, Colonel de Brouilly, intendant d'Esgrigny, and commissaries Coubertin and Trezin.<sup>(3)</sup> The general tenor of these letters was contempt for the Irish troops, and praise for the part played by the French troops in covering the retreat from the battlefield. There was some criticism, overt or implied, of the leadership.

Zurlauben, the German brigadier, was especially scathing in his statement that La Hoguette, Brigadier Famechon, Major-General Chemerault and Colonel Merode, together with the staff officers

and the majority of the officers of their regiments, had left their troops one hour before daybreak on the morning after the battle. He had brought the French troops and cannon to Limerick. Laisné and La



*King Louis XIV of France – the Sun King.*



Tour, artillery officers, had helped with the transport of the cannon, while d'Esgrigny had saved the treasure. His case is weakened somewhat by the fact that he had lost 500 men through desertion after the battle, while the other five French regiments had lost 100 men each.

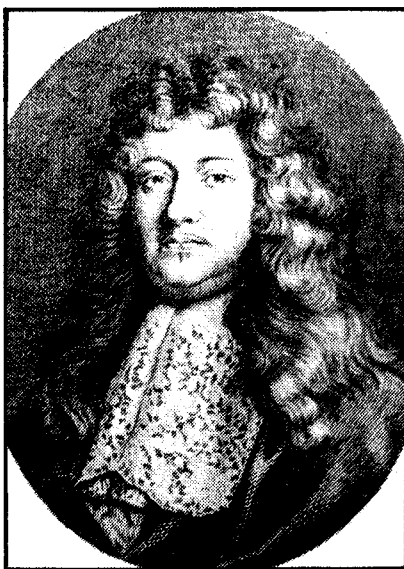
The main fault in Lauzun's leadership appears to have been indecision. Lieutenant General de La Hoguette wrote to Louvois the French Minister for War in cipher that 'he has completely lost the trust of the Irish officers, especially since the day of our defeat, and indeed, Monseigneur, I feel obliged to tell you that from the moment the enemy appeared on the riverbank on the eve of the battle, and throughout the whole of the following day, he appeared to all to be in such a lethargic state that he was incapable of taking a decision, no matter what one suggested to him, and that finally he never found the opportunity of using our troops, although the enemy gave us every possible opportunity'.<sup>(4)</sup>

Meanwhile, the remnants of the Irish Jacobite army had arrived at Limerick. Colonel O'Kelly justly remarks that 'it is admirable how every individual person, both officer and soldier, came thither without any orders, and without the conduct of any of their Chief Commanders, as if they were guided to Limerick by some secret instinct of Nature'.<sup>(5)</sup> They had come, without guidance or sustenance, a distance of 150 miles, which would indicate that they, at least, expected the struggle to continue. Twelve thousand or so men now gathered in the town to await the enemy.

The French were appalled at the situation in which they now found themselves. They had been involved in an ignominious defeat, whereas in King Louis's wars they had become accustomed to victory. They now found themselves about to be involved in the defence of a town whose fortifications were of a very different order from those devised by Sébastien le Prestre Vauban, that French genius whose work can still be admired along the Rhine. We have no documentary evidence for Lauzun's celebrated remark that his master could capture the town with roasted apples.<sup>(6)</sup> La Vigne, the chief engineer, on the other hand, does not appear to be unduly dismayed at the condition of the walls. He sends a plan of the town to Louvois on 27 July (17 July), and writes that a covered way is being made:

*The walls of the two towns are of quite good masonry, but have a thickness of only four to five feet on top, the said walls having only half a foot of batter. On top there is a walkway three feet wide on the thickness of the wall. The said walls are twenty-five to thirty feet high and are not terraced behind.*

*The Irish town is completely surrounded by high ground to a distance of a half*



*The Marquis de Louvois,  
French Minister of War.*

*cannon-shot. This ground is much higher than the town walls and is nearly all rock. The enemy can encamp a very large army with complete security behind these hills, and can threaten us with a very wide spread of batteries that we could not destroy, not having any place for cannon in the castle A and the towers B, C, D., and also a battery E, G, that we are setting up. If we have the time, I will terrace the bastion F in order to place cannon there. The masonry is seven feet thick at the bottom, three feet at the top, and is 11 to 12 feet high.*

*As regards the river, Monseigneur, it can be forded in many places at low tide, but at high tide it rises by six to seven feet.<sup>(7)</sup>*

La Vigne concludes by saying that because time is short, he does not send an account of many bizarre details of the battle which he is sure will not be related to Louvois by others, but that he will do so at the earliest possible opportunity. This in all probability refers to his account of the battle at the Boyne, which caused a rumpus among the French commanding officers. He was not at the battle himself, and had asked Colonel Zurlauben to give him some details of the affair. Zurlauben was extremely critical of the conduct of the battle, and expressed this criticism in a document which fell into the hands of La Hoguette and some of the other French colonels. La Vigne confessed that Zurlauben was the author of the offending report, while Zurlauben countered by saying that La Vigne had altered his account, and had also included an account written by another officer.<sup>(8)</sup>

This indicates the tension then existing among the French officers, and the lack of confidence felt by many in their leaders. While the few wanted to remain in Ireland and carry on the struggle, the majority had become totally

disillusioned with their Irish experience. The country was wretchedly poor, with none of the splendours and glamour of contemporary France. Transport was virtually impossible, with bad roads, unnavigable rivers, and shortage of horses and vehicles. The Frenchmen were officers in the best army in Europe, where wars were a stately progress to certain victory, and where cities were nearly impregnable fortified, and captured according to well-defined rules of procedure, and above all where troops were generally maintained in some degree of comfort. They now found themselves in alien surroundings, among people of another language and culture, largely undisciplined, and more interested in their own survival than in the grand designs of Louis XIV and James II. For the French officers the only decision was not that of returning to France, but when that return could take place without losing face.

Lauzun made up his mind to bring the French troops to Galway and there await developments. He gave his reasons for the move in a letter to Louvois written on 10 August (31 July), 1690.<sup>(9)</sup> Limerick could not hold all the Jacobite troops, and the divisions between the Irish and French troops made it imperative to move the latter. The port of Galway, unlike that of Limerick, was a fine open port where ships could shelter without fear of enemy attack, and where they could sail in most winds. The town was better built and surrounded by inhospitable country that would offer no sustenance to enemy troops. Other letters from French officers relate that the French were dependent on bread and wine or beer, whereas the Irish could exist on oatmeal which they ate cooked or raw, diluted with milk or water. They were accustomed to hardship and, as the English John Stevens remarked, 'They live not at home so well at best as they do at worst in the army both for diet and clothes'.<sup>(10)</sup>

M. Forant, chef d'escadre, had escorted some badly needed supplies of wheat to Limerick, some of which Lauzun sent on to Galway. Only a third of the garrison could be supplied with bread because of a shortage of grain mills. He had collected some hand-mills but these were insufficient and of poor quality. The hapless Lauzun had hoped to receive orders to embark his troops on M. Forant's fleet, since they were no longer fit to serve 'having lost all our baggage, with nothing left but the shirt on our back'.<sup>(11)</sup>

He then goes on to describe an accident which must have angered Louis only slightly less than would that of the loss of his troops. This was the accident which occurred when commissary Coubertin and ten others perished while ferrying the treasure from the town to the fleet. The safety of the *trésor* was of vital importance as on it depended the preser-

vation of the troops, so it was decided to send it aboard M. Forant's fleet which was then in the river, and to send it at night, so that the Irish would know nothing about it. A violent storm arose when the small boat was only half a league from the town, and it sank with the loss of its precious cargo, and eleven out of the fourteen on board. The loss amounted to 81,298 livres together with 20,000 écus belonging to the officers. Since the coins were gold or silver, the present-day value of this treasure would be considerable. There were thirty fathoms of water and a very rocky bottom at the place where the boat went down, and it was found impossible to salvage anything. The money lost in the Shannon, together with the 87,618 livres that had been pillaged at the Boyne, represented about six weeks' pay for the French troops. There remained six weeks' pay in the hands of the paymaster, which was a precarious position for a force so far removed from home.<sup>(12)</sup>

And so the French departed for Galway. They had lost men, money, arms and supplies, but had to wait for deliverance in the form of a recall to the delights of the homeland. Lauzun wrote that 'nothing can be done here with such people. I am surprised that Rosen did not go mad here. As for me, I am exhausted. There is nothing to be gained here but shame, danger and suffering'.<sup>(13)</sup> He and Tyrconnell could not be seen to desert the sinking ship, so as far as possible remained with the cavalry camp at Quin, and reported frequently on the situation to the court at Versailles.

Not all the French went to Galway. The most important of those who remained in the city was the marquis de Boisseleau, major-general, and colonel of an Irish regiment, who was governor of Limerick during the siege. He, above any of the French officers, was in a position to know the Irish Jacobites. He had won the respect of the Irish, but the Irish do not appear to have won his respect. He wrote to his wife after the Boyne:

*In all the movements which I saw the enemy make, they conducted themselves in a soldierly fashion, their troops went bravely into the firing line. These savages here, who are unaccustomed to war, were taken completely by surprise, and terror soon took hold of them. The officers did no good and showed bad example. Such terror and such a rout were never heard of. It was impossible to rally them.<sup>(14)</sup>*

However, after the successful outcome of the first siege of Limerick, he was to write in a far different vein:

*The officers of the besieged distinguished themselves greatly during the siege, and the Irish soldiers not alone fought, but bore with extraordinary patience all the hardships which were indeed very great, because they were nearly always under*



*The Maréchal-duc de Vauban.*

*arms; and because they lacked most of the necessities of life, as well as medical remedies for the sick and wounded.<sup>(15)</sup>*

But in spite of his success, Boisseleau also wanted to leave Ireland, as service in that country was now very disagreeable for the French.<sup>(16)</sup> On his return to France he was very well received by the king, 'who told him that he had enhanced his own honour and that of the nation'.<sup>(17)</sup>

The French fleet meanwhile sailed into Galway, fifteen men of war, nine frigates and seven fireships, under the command of the marquis d'Anfreville, a senior naval commander. He felt the French troops should remain in Ireland, in view of the successful defence of Athlone and Limerick, but the officers one and all were madly impatient to return to France.<sup>(18)</sup>

The fleet sailed from Galway on 23 September (13 September) 1690, bringing back some 5,584 officers and men. Their contribution to the campaign had been significant, especially their intendants' efforts to bring French law and order into Irish military life. They were mainly responsible for procuring supplies from France, and overseeing their distribution. They made enormous efforts to clothe, feed and pay the Jacobite army in face of overwhelming odds. The French commanding officers conducted an orderly retreat from the Boyne. Their contribution to the actual battle had been slight, but this was mainly the fault of Lauzun, who had no experience of commanding in the field. The disaster at the Boyne was counter-balanced by the successes at Athlone and Limerick and, above all, Boisseleau's leadership at Limerick restored the confidence of the troops, and forced William to raise the siege and acknowledge that he had received there a check to his triumphal Irish progress.

#### APPENDIX 1

*M. de Lauzun to M. de Louvois,  
At Limerick, this 10th of August  
[31 July], 1690  
(Guerre A1 962, No. 153)*

Sir,

I have waited until now in the hope of receiving your orders, on which I expect to base my conduct, but the approach of the enemy army makes me believe that I will have time only to make the best defence of which I am capable, in a wretched post which lacks everything, and with Irishmen who hate us so much that we fear they will injure us as much as the Prince of Orange. My trumpet, having been kept by the Prince for more than a month, came from them the day before yesterday, when they were twelve miles from here. The Prince of Orange, having taken Waterford and Duncannon, left for Dublin on Saturday last, from where is to return to England. He has with him Prince George, the marquis de Montpouillant, Count Schomberg,<sup>(19)</sup> two companies of his bodyguard, three of his old cavalry regiments, and one of dragoons, with nine battalions. He had intended being present at this siege and finishing there the Irish campaign, but he received two letters on Friday from the Princess of Orange, one at ten o'clock in the morning, and the other at four o'clock in the afternoon, which obliged him to depart immediately, and leave the command of his army in this kingdom to Count Solms, who is mustering the troops which had besieged Waterford together with the 35 large cannon, in order to besiege Limerick.

He had detached General Douglas to besiege Athlone, who had been there for seven days bombarding the town. They wanted to cross the river and so enter that part of the town which had not been burnt, but they retired with the loss of a colonel and some captains; and upon hearing that the Duke of Tyrconnell and I were marching there with a large detachment of our troops, that is to say, with nearly all our better troops, they raised the siege and rejoined Count Solms to come here together, while I have returned here since the day before yesterday with the thousand French musketeers which had been detached for this expedition. There was not a crumb of bread in this post when we retired here, but when I learnt that M. Forant was at Kinsale with the four frigates remaining from the squadron which the King of England had taken, together with some merchant vessels laden with corn, I asked him to bring them here to succour us, which he has done to such good purpose, that the three fluyts laden with corn and sent by the commissary general, have prevented us dying of hunger, and I have made a provision for five weeks from a portion of it, and sent the rest to Galway, to which place I had intended to retreat, while awaiting the king's decision to



*Antonin Nompar de Caumont, Comte de Lauzun (1632-1723). Attributed to Pierre Mignard. Musées d'Art et d'Histoire de la Rochelle.*

send vessels to bring us back, provided always the enemy gives us the time for it; for it is so difficult to arrive at the mouth of the river, where the vessels are, that it takes four long days for the infantry to get there from here, even when the way is not blocked by the enemy; and I have gone expressly to Galway, where I discovered that the ships could approach very near, that the embarkation should be very easy, and the post, possibly, is not as bad as this, but is so neglected and devoid of everything, that no reasonable person could believe such an extremity; but the Duke of Tyrconnell and all the Irish protested to us so vehemently that they would be destroyed if we abandoned them in this manner, that I could take no other decision but to remain here, in the belief that I would be acting against the wishes and honour of the

king and nation, were I to leave by one of the town gates, while the enemy approached by the other to begin their siege.

There are not enough mills in this town to provide a third of the bread required by the garrison, but I have gathered together some hand mills, whose stones are half-broken, which will be distributed to each company to manage as best they can, but the soldier will suffer greatly.

In the hope of receiving your orders, or some help to try to embark on M. Forant's frigates and the merchant ships accompanying him, I had prepared some casks of water; but seeing that I was not receiving any communication from you, and that, moreover, it was impossible to embark all our troops, and that those who should remain here at the mercy of

the Irish would run the risk of being butchered, I could not bring myself to embark them and abandon the others, or hold back any longer M. Forant's squadron, which has now been augmented, for fear of interrupting in that way some project more important to the king than the preservation of our troops here. My intention is, however, if the enemies do not attack us here, and turn towards Cork and Kinsale, to go with the French troops to Galway, and even if we make such a good defence here that I can make a good settlement, I would ask to be conducted to Galway. I will try also during the siege to maintain a correspondence with the governor of Galway. The reason for this, Sir, is that if we are not in a position to receive your orders here, I see no other place except Galway where we can receive news from you, even if they do not besiege that place at the same time as this; for they have an extremely strong army, and have commissioned some Irish gentlemen to raise twelve regiments, who have already mustered ten thousand men, and I see that that number will increase greatly, and that this region here is completely undone. That, Sir, is why any help that the king may send here is wasted, and the troops that I command here incapable of serving, having lost all our baggage, equipment, with nothing left but the shirt on our back.

As for the cannon and money, they were intact, but wishing to send 100,000 livres<sup>(20)</sup> to the fleet, where I thought it would be more secure than in a post under siege, I had asked the Intendant to take the necessary measures to conduct it there, and he chose for this duty Commissary Coubertin, with an escort of six captains, whom he placed in a boat which he considered good, but the vessel sank at a distance of one [ ]<sup>(21)</sup> from M. Forant's ship, and the commissary and captains were drowned. We hope to salvage the vessel if we find it, and no effort is being spared in this matter. I have asked the Intendant to return to M. Forant's ship for this purpose, and to take surer measures for removing the rest of the money which we have there. I find myself very perplexed to know what I should do to preserve the rest of our money; namely, whether I should leave it on a merchant ship, or on a small boat, or remain here without subsistence, which would make me fear for our troops. That is why I asked the Intendant to go himself to take measures with M. Forant to preserve the remainder of the treasure, having kept enough here for five weeks' pay, or to conduct the whole amount here, where I fear all the time that when our troops are engaged in an attack, the Irish will come to pillage it, for as I have already had the honour to inform you, we have been pillaged only by them, and the enemy took nothing of our baggage.

I assure you, Sir, that I am in extreme distress here, and I am persuaded that I



will make many mistakes, but I hope, Sir, that you will excuse them to the King, if you consider closely the conditions here and the sort of people with whom I have to deal, for there are four or five Englishmen here, unworthy little favourites of the King of England, who, imitating the habit of Lord Dover, intrigue continually against us, and for this situation the Duke of Tyrconnell, who is full of good will, has no remedy.<sup>(22)</sup>

However, I can assure you, Sir, that if, contrary to my expectations, the help which the king will please to send us, arrives in time, I think it would be expedient to send more vessels than would be required for the transport of our troops, which could also be used to bring back the best Irish regiments, which I would regret to see joining the Prince of Orange, especially three cavalry regiments which are extremely good.

I hope, Sir, that in view of the complete sacrifice I made to the king by coming here, he will be kind enough to withdraw me whatever happens, whether I remain in the hands of the enemy, or whether I remain no longer in the sad position of being the attendant of the Duke of Tyrconnell, which I will willingly continue to be, as I have already been, if I see in that some usefulness to the king's service.

I sustain our troops with the hope of help arriving soon, but the indiscipline of the Irish has spoiled them for me, and I was obliged to hang three of them today, for fear of finding myself in even more trouble.

I send you, Sir, the muster-roll of our troops, as also those of the enemy army, which my trumpet drew up for me, who counted them several times on the march and in the camp.

I assure you also, Sir, that the Prince of Orange had marched to Waterford on receipt of a letter that Lord Dover had written to General Kirk, that he<sup>(23)</sup> only had to appear and that he<sup>(24)</sup> had prepared the capitulation having taken the corn from two vessels which had been loaded by Alvares, and firing the cannon at them to arrest them, which corn now serves the enemy for the siege of Limerick, without which they would have found no subsistence to keep their army together.

I beseech you, Sir, to communicate with me as quickly as possible, for we are in desperate straits here, and to rest assured that no one honours you with so much respect, etc.

#### APPENDIX 2

*M. de Lauzun to M. de Louvois,  
At Limerick, this 11th of August  
[1 August], 1690.  
(Guerre A1 962, No. 155)*

Sir,

Since the letter which I had the honour to write to you the day before yesterday, I wish to inform you that in



*East wall of the Irishtown, interior, looking south towards the Breach.*

the arrangements that Mylord Tyrconnell wished to make for the best possible defence of the remainder of this kingdom, he recognised that it was impossible to keep all his troops at Limerick, there being no means of subsistence for them there, especially for the cavalry, which has made him decide to divide the infantry, the greater part in Limerick, and the remainder in Galway and Athlone. I represented to him that since Limerick was the capital of the territory remaining in his hands, his fellow countrymen should defend it, that as for me, the commander of the French auxiliary troops, I requested Galway which was a sea-port, the only place at the moment from which I could receive the help and the orders that you could send me from the king; that, besides, with a portion of the money for the payment of our troops lost, it was essential for me to be in a place where I could receive some, which was impossible at Limerick, where it was useless for me to defend myself well, since the delay would incur the death by starvation of our people for lack of pay; and that since the King of England had promised a place of retreat, I asked for that place although it is very bad, which I could defend better with the French troops and the garrison, than mixed with a large body of Irishmen who do not like us.

Lord Tyrconnell found this very reasonable, but Messrs. Dorrington and Luttrell, who are declared enemies of the French, behave in their usual fashion, that is they intrigue in order to harm us as much as they can.<sup>(25)</sup> I continue to send away the French today, and I myself will stay with Lord Tyrconnell, to see if we

can attack the enemy with his cavalry and the dragoons, in case they pass the river or besiege Limerick, which we will defend as well as we can; after which we will return to Galway to sustain a siege there, and prolong in this way the affairs of Ireland as long as possible, and ruin the army with the help of the autumn, while awaiting the help which it shall please the king to send me, in order to send back our troops and the Irish that Lord Tyrconnell will select. I ask your pardon for writing in my own hand, but my secretary has not returned from the river where I sent him with some packets for you.

I am with respect, Sir, your obedient servant,

Lauzun.

Nothing can be done here with such people. I am surprised that Rosen did not go mad here. As for me, I am exhausted. There is nothing to be gained here but shame, danger and suffering. I am taking away to Galway twenty-five thousand pounds of powder, which is half of what was here, and our twelve cannon, of which six are split since the day that Schomberg was killed.<sup>(26)</sup>

#### APPENDIX 3

*An Account of what happened at the  
Siege of Limerick, sent from Limerick  
to M. Louvois 20 September  
(10 September), 1690.  
(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris,  
Fonds français 5561)<sup>(27)</sup>*

On 19 August (9 August), the Prince of Orange sent a trumpet to Major-General Boisseleau, who commanded the King of England's troops in Limerick, who



*Title on the chart of the Shannon Estuary, prepared by the French Ministry of the Marine, 1690.*

informed him that he was still awaiting officers from him who would bring acceptance of the capitulation which the Prince wished to grant to him and his garrison. Major-General Boisseleau replied that he was surprised by the letter he had received, and that he wished to earn the esteem of the Prince of Orange by the vigorous defence of the King of England's troops, which he had the honour to command, and that he remained his most humble and obedient servant.

Signed Boisseleau.

At nightfall on the same day, the enemy having denied me access to both sides of the river, planted a battery at Cromwell's fort of five twelve pound cannon. They planted another near the hornwork of four twelve-pounders. The same evening they opened a trench from the stone redoubt and the central redoubt.

The following day passed with cannons firing on all sides, as the situation and the terrain allowed them to approach the two redoubts with very little trouble.

On the ninth day, having pushed the head of their works towards the two redoubts which they captured, the stone redoubt made better resistance than the other. The enemy lost a number of men; only one lieutenant and eleven men of the king's troops remained in the redoubt.

I had only begun these two redoubts twenty-four hours before the arrival of their army, and since they were not sufficiently high to prevent grenades being thrown into them, the enemy was able to take possession of them more

easily as a result of all the grenades that they threw into them. As soon as they had taken the two redoubts, three battalions advanced openly between the redoubts towards the covered way to a distance of eighty yards. When I noticed this I caused them to be fired on from the covered way and from the rampart, to such good effect that these gentlemen took the trouble to return to their trenches with some displeasure.

The following day, Monday, at dawn they planted a battery of four cannon in the central redoubt, where they spent the day bombarding the covered way, for it was somewhat enfiladed, and though they killed many soldiers and officers there with their cannon fire, the troops did not ask to be relieved.

The following night they pushed their works to within thirty yards of the last earthen redoubt on the side of the marsh, but foreseeing that they would come on the night after that to attack this redoubt, I sent Lord Kilmallock in the mist, with 300 horse whom I posted on the hill where the earthen redoubt had been built, and Mr. Fitzgerald, lieutenant-colonel of Lord Bellew's regiment, whom I put in this redoubt with 150 musketeers. The enemy came to attack the redoubt between midnight and one o'clock. The troops were Danish and Brandenburgers. The lieutenant-colonel defended well. Lord Kilmallock, who commanded the infantry, and Mr. Carroll, the cavalry, charged the enemy so effectively that they obliged them to return to their trenches in great disorder, and took nine prisoners and one officer, and killed many of them.

Having failed in their objective, the

enemy bombarded this earthen redoubt from the battery which they had planted two days before, from daybreak to one o'clock in the afternoon. Since the redoubt had only just been constructed, it was not difficult to destroy. The Prince of Orange appeared on the hill where Cromwell's fort is situated between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, and since it was the time for the changing of the guard, he attacked the redoubt. The king's troops resisted for as long as they possibly could. We lost there twenty-two men and twenty officers. The remainder retired to the covered way. There was such intense fire from the counterscarp and the rampart that it delayed the occupation of the redoubt by the enemy. At the same time, I sent out 150 musketeers from the regiments of the Guards and Lord Kilmallock, under the command of Colonel Purcell and Lieutenant-Colonel Bourke, whom I ordered to line a curtain opposite the earthen redoubt, in order to fire on the enemy and prevent the occupation of that work. At the same time the [enemy] cavalry advanced and charged. Luttrell's regiment stood their ground, and the commander of the enemy cavalry was killed, with many officers killed or wounded. The cavalry captured Monsieur Bouribeaux, a lieutenant on half-pay of the regiment of Schomberg, who was leading the enemy squadrons. The Prince of Orange, seeing that matters were not going his way, advanced a body of infantry to defend the redoubt, and sent for all the half-pay officers of the cavalry regiment of Schomberg, in order to force the king's troops to abandon the post where I had put them. Since I noticed that the enemy had been reinforced, and that the contest was unequal, I ordered the king's troops to retreat, and considered that the Prince of Orange had paid dearly for the redoubt. We lost 100 men in this action, the colonel and the lieutenant-colonel. Belcastel, a French colonel, wounded in the leg, is reputed to have had the limb amputated. The enemy admits the loss of 300 men and many French officers.

On the following night the enemy raised a battery in this redoubt of five cannon of twenty-four and one of twenty-six.

The next day at daybreak they decided to make a breach. As for me I decided on a retirade<sup>(28)</sup> in good time to make it properly. They continued their works, approaching to thirty yards from the covered way. From time to time we made sorties in order to delay their workers. I could do no more, for the enemy had surrounded the covered way and continued the same fire. At that moment I thought only of defending my covered way, and in the five days that they had spent advancing their works to thirty yards from it, a breach of forty-two yards was made. I expected to be attacked every moment.

Thursday 6 September[27 August] between one and two in the afternoon, the enemy attacked me and obliged the troops in the covered way to retreat behind the traverses<sup>(29)</sup> which had been made at St. John's Gate, where they made a stand. I had hidden from the enemy a battery to defend the retirade, which I uncovered only a quarter of an hour before the attack, having foreseen that I was going to be attacked. This battery comprised one piece of thirty-six and two of twenty-four. When the enemy had captured the covered way, they decided to climb to the breach. Fortunately I had had the time to place the king's troops in the posts where they were essential for his service, and at the same time, I took the precaution of having some at hand for relief in case of necessity, since the enemy had thrown down the rampart with their cannon, for it was only a poor dry stone wall with no terraces. When the enemy climbed to the breach with much force and boldness, I allowed them come to the top in great silence, for I had no fire to prevent them doing so. I caused the cannon, charged with cartouches<sup>(30)</sup> and iron chains, to be fired with good effect against the top of the breach. The retirade commenced a continuous fire, and the rampart, which was lined with soldiers, exposed itself to the enemy with the greatest intrepidity. The enemy's fire against the rampart from a battery of eighteen cannon and their musketry did not for an instant bring about the retreat of the Irish, who were undergoing very heavy fire. Two hundred men were killed or wounded on the rampart, and I had no trouble in filling the empty positions with soldiers of very good will.

This action lasted three and a half hours with intense firing from both sides. When the enemy attacked, I defended with the regiments of Grand Prior, Slane and Boisseleau, who all performed miracles. M. de Beaupré, lieutenant-colonel of Boisseleau's regiment, and Mr. Connell, lieutenant-colonel of the Slane regiment, displayed the greatest courage and steadfastness. The former was killed on the top of the breach, as were many officers from these regiments. I raised the three colonels' colours on the top of the breach at the beginning of the attack. It was a Danish captain of grenadiers with fourteen grenadiers who entered our retirade, but it was a cannon shot which performed so effectively against the crest of the breach that it struck the retirade and the covered way, for I had given orders that no cannon was to be fired until the enemy had crowded upon the breach. I chose 400 men from the unarmed MacMahon regiment to throw stones, which was very effective, as the enemy themselves admitted.

In the last hour of the attack I noticed that the enemy was flagging, and that they had trouble in establishing communications between their lodgments on



*Sell's old house by the city wall.*

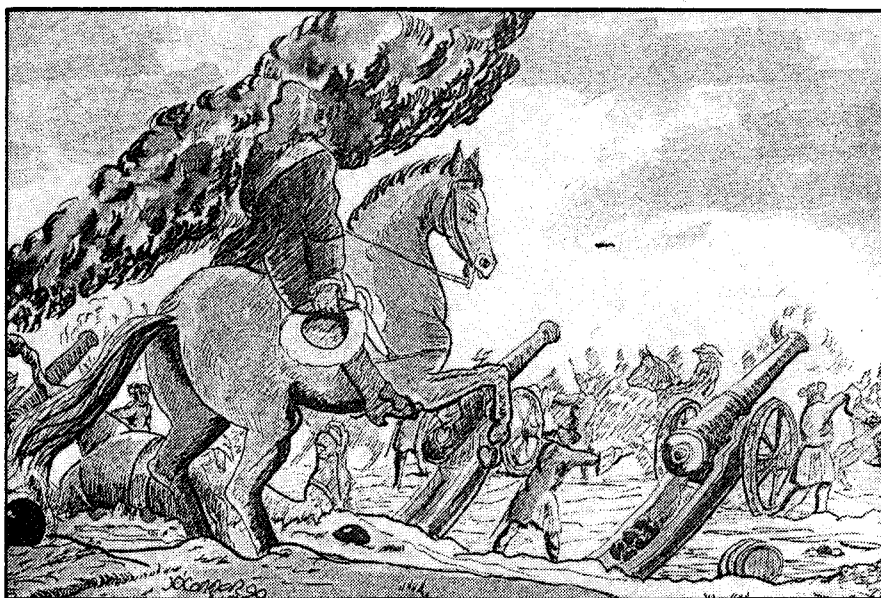
the covered way and their trenches. At the same time, as I was ready to give orders to Maxwell's dragoons and to Brigadier Talbot, who had retreated behind the traverses at St. John's Gate, two English regiments marched straight against them to take this position. The king's troops fought so well there that they obliged the enemy to retire in great disorder, having subjected them to some very heavy gunfire. Seeing this fruitless movement by their troops, and a piece of good luck that befell us at the same time regarding four barrels of powder, which lay forgotten in a corner near the wall of the main building of the post (these four barrels went on fire. The enemy thought it was a mine, for the powder caused the death of more than thirty of their troops), I sent an order to Brigadier Talbot, whose turn of duty it was, to endeavour to march against the enemy in order to capture the covered way. The enemy, seeing the vigorous enterprise of the king's troops, and that they were unsuccessful in all their initiatives, although fresh troops were sent to them

from time to time, retreated in disorder a quarter of an hour after the capture of the covered way. I chased the enemy, with pike and sword, from the lodgment which they had begun on the glacis, to their trenches. That day cost them nearly 2,000 men, and it was all the good troops of the Prince of Orange who attacked, together with the army grenadiers. There remained only six effective officers from the French regiment of Cambon. Seventy-one officers from this regiment had been killed or wounded. Count [John] Hamilton attacked ceaselessly. He proved himself a brave and good officer.

I remained on my guard for the remainder of the day and the night. At nightfall the enemy planted a battery of four cannon at the edge of the marsh, to break the bridge between the two towns, which inconvenienced the people who wished to pass from one town to the other. The battery was in use day and night until the Prince of Orange raised the siege.

The following day at ten o'clock in the morning, the Prince of Orange sent a





*William mounts an attack on the walls of Limerick.  
Painting by John O'Connor.*

drummer from his Guards to ask if I wished an hour's truce for the withdrawal of the dead. I told him that I had none in the counterscarp or on the glacis, but that I would allow him to withdraw his dead from four to five o'clock, on condition that no one approached the covered way closer than twenty yards, and that I would send any dead from the covered way and the counterscarp to twenty yards from the palisade. At the same time I said to the drummer that I was prepared to stand firm against a second assault, and that I hoped the outcome would be even better.

The following night they advanced their works by only ten yards, since we had fired on them ceaselessly all night long. The next night they abandoned their trenches and removed their cannon, and the following day occupied the same positions as they occupied when they blockaded the town between the two rivers.

The day after they had abandoned their trenches, the Duke of Tyrconnell and M. de Lauzun sent a great quantity of supplies, together with 1,200 fusiliers or dragoons, who were eager to prove their courage. The Prince of Orange departed in the evening, and the army filed off after him in great consternation. Having a great many sick or wounded which they could not take with them, they burned them in their hospitals on their departure<sup>(31)</sup> and burned all round them wherever they passed. The Prince left that evening for Dublin. I sent word of his departure to the Count de Lauzun and to Lord Tyrconnell, who were ten miles from Limerick, and they arrived at the town at four o'clock in the evening. As soon as the enemy had abandoned their trenches, I ordered them to be filled in.

Since I had the honour of commanding this post, I must report that the troops conducted themselves with the utmost bravery during twenty-one days of siege. The enemy lost more than 5,000 men, the commanders of their regiments and the best officers. The king's army lost 1,062 men killed or wounded and 97 officers killed or wounded.

#### APPENDIX 4

*M. de Boisseleau to M. de Louvois,  
From Brest, 2 October  
[22 September], 1690.  
(Guerre A1 962, No. 61)*

Monseigneur,

After the raising of the siege of Limerick, I requested of Mylord Duke of Tyrconnell and M. de Lauzun permission to go to France, service in this country being very disagreeable for the French. Since I had the honour to command in Limerick, I was obliged to take all sorts of precautions to oppose all those ill-intentioned and seditious persons, who spent all their time devising new stratagems to prevent me serving the king,<sup>(32)</sup> I had more trouble with those persons than I had during the defence of the post. Mylord Tyrconnell and M. Lauzun will tell you more about it than I can, since they know more about it. The more I put up with their impertinences, thinking only of saving the post, the more they endeavoured to cause me the greatest possible vexation. Their jealousy, together with a great deal of ignorance, makes an honest man suffer in that country. I would prefer to be a musketeer in France than to be a general in that country, because they hoped to drive me mad.

I send you, Monseigneur, the account

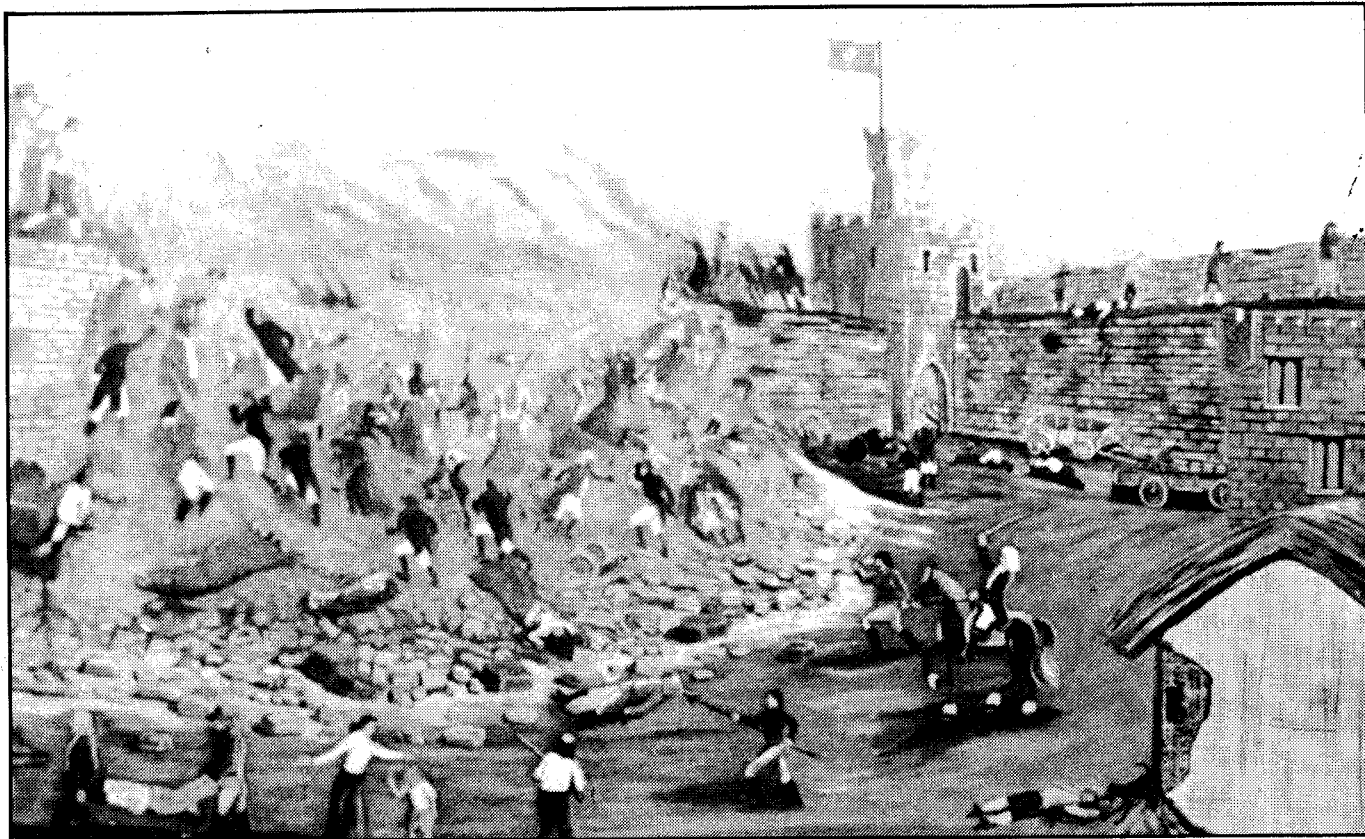
of the siege of Limerick, that I conducted as well as I could, in spite of all the ill-natured persons I had with me, and due to the manner in which I had prepared myself for the reception of the second assault, M. the Prince of Orange ran the risk of losing half his infantry there. I find that, on a close examination of everything, he was wise to raise the siege, because with ground and troops, I could have resisted for a long time, and I was determined to perish rather to surrender, which did not at all please the local mylords, who had much at stake and saw a breach forty-two yards wide. The foolish fellows who were in that post obliged me to have always at hand the keys of the gates and the stores, not daring to trust anyone for fear of an accident, for I was alone in my stand. Those people only like war that is conducted with disorder and indiscipline. It is a pity that the officers are useless in that country, for the soldier is willing. If I had had officers of the quality that exists in France, I would have given M. the Prince of Orange far more trouble than I did. I could not make use of those people, since they had no knowledge of their business. Only half the troops were armed, there was neither flour nor bread, neither surgeons nor medicines. A wounded man was a dead man, the garrison was downcast because of the misfortune that had befallen us at Drogheda.<sup>(33)</sup> In order to overcome the lethargy of the soldier and the degeneration of the troops and officers, I had to endeavour to give them a martial bearing and contempt for the Prince of Orange's army, constantly telling them that there was no other way of saving the rest of Ireland and recovering their honour and glory.

The Prince of Orange can count on it that in the next campaign, if he wishes to come to Ireland, he will find troops who will cause him more trouble than in the past, for the infantry that I have left in Limerick is on a good footing. With even a little help from France, the Prince of Orange will be obliged to have a considerable army in Ireland, and if the Irish are well led, it should not be difficult to return to Dublin. Being unwell, I cannot go immediately to pay my respects to you. I very humbly beg of you to continue to be my protector. I will endeavour during the rest of my life to be always worthy of your goodness, remaining with profound respect, etc.

#### NOTES

1. First of July (Old Style). I have used new style dating in the course of this article, since it had been adopted in France since the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in 1582. Old style dates will appear alongside.
2. See S. Mulloy, 'French Eye-Witnesses of the Boyne', *Irish Sword*, 59 (1982), pp. 105-11.
3. Ibid.





*The attack on the Breach. Painting by Robert Duhig. Limerick Civic Trust.*

4. See S. Mulloy (ed.), *Franco-Irish Correspondence*, II (1984), No. 1031.
5. J.C. O'Callaghan (ed.), *Macariae Excidium or the Destruction of Cyprus* (1850), pp. 55-6.
6. The source for this remark appears to be the history of Ireland by the Abbé MacGeoghegan as quoted by O'Callaghan, op. cit., p. 368.
7. *Franco-Irish Correspondence*, III (1984), No. 1950.
8. See S. Mulloy, 'French Engineers with the Jacobite Army in Ireland, 1689-01', *Irish Sword*, 61 (1983) pp. 222-32.
9. *Franco-Irish Correspondence*, II, No. 1032. See translation in Appendix I.
10. *The Journal of John Stevens, containing a brief account of the war in Ireland, 1689-1691*, edited by the Rev. Robert H. Murray (Oxford, 1912), p. 140.
11. See Appendix 1.
12. *Franco-Irish Correspondence*, II (1984), No. 1035.
13. op. cit., No. 1034. See translation in Appendix 2.
14. op. cit., I (1983), No. 873.
15. This is from an account in John Gilbert, *A Jacobite Narrative of the War in Ireland, 1688-1691* (1971), Appendix IX, pp. 260-7. It is the account that was printed in the *Gazette de France*, and is a somewhat shorter version, told in the third person, of an account sent by Boisseleau to Louvois on 20 September/10 September, 1690 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds français 5561). The latter has been published in *Mémoires du Marquis de Sourches sur le règne de Louis XIV*, le Comte de Cosnac et Arthur Bertrand (Paris, 1882). This work is not easily available in Ireland, and many of the personal names are transcribed incorrectly, so it has been deemed advisable to supply a translation, which will be found in Appendix 3.
16. See Appendix 4.
17. *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau*, MM. Soulié, etc. (Paris 1854), entry for 12 October/2 October, 1690.
18. Marine B412, folios 270-271, d'Anfreville to Seignelay, 9 September/30 August, 1690.
19. Son of Maréchal Schomberg.
20. There were fourteen livres in a contemporary English pound.
21. Portion of the page is missing at this point.
22. Lauzun is here referring to that faction in the Jacobite army that was opposed to the leadership of Tyrconnell and promoted the leadership of Sarsfield. The leaders of the faction were Colonels Henry Luttrell and Nicholas Purcell. They were supported by Dr. John Molony, Bishop of Cork, and Colonel Simon Luttrell. They went to France at the end of 1690 to persuade King Louis to restrict the military authority of Tyrconnell, and to send a new general and more help to Ireland.
23. i.e. the Prince of Orange. The French refuse him the title of king in the course of this correspondence.
24. i.e. Lord Dover.
25. See note 22.
26. i.e. the battle of the Boyne.
27. The writer of this article has made use of the Gilbert and Sourches' versions where blanks occur in the manuscript, or where personal names have been misspelt.
28. Defined by Larousse as 'a shelter behind which one retires in order to continue the defence when a more advanced work has been captured'.
29. Defined by Gaya as 'a casting up of earth to cover men, that they may not lye open' in *Traité des Armes 1678*, ed. Charles Ffoulkes (1911), p. 114.
30. Case-shot, or bullets in a tin box fired from cannon without fuse.
31. This statement is at variance with that published in *A Jacobite Narrative of the War in Ireland*, p. 266, which reads in translation, 'They set fire to their camp, burning everything that they could not take away, and the fire having taken hold of the hospital, many of the sick perished in the conflagration'.
32. See note 22.
33. i.e. at the Boyne.
- \* The first part of this article appeared in the French edition of the *Old Limerick Journal*, No. 25, Summer, 1989.