

MEMOIRS OF THE DUKE OF BERWICK

INTRODUCTION BY LARRY WALSH

James Fitzjames, Duke of Berwick, was the eldest son of James, Duke of York, later King James II, by his mistress Arabella Churchill, elder sister of John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough. He was born at Moulins in France on 21 August, 1670, and surnamed Fitzjames by his father. He was educated in France by the Jesuits. In 1685, his father, now king, sent him in service to Charles, Duke of Lorraine, then besieging Buda in Hungary, which was held by the Turks. There he distinguished himself, and showed courage and sobriety. At the conclusion of the campaign he went to England and was created Duke of Berwick, Earl of Teignmouth and Baron Bosworth on 19 March, 1687. He served another campaign under Lorraine, but early in 1688 was recalled to England by James and made governor of Portsmouth and colonel of the Royal Horse Guards. At the Revolution he was unable to hold Portsmouth and fled to France to join James, with whom he came to Ireland in March, 1689. Berwick worked energetically raising troops among Irish Catholics, served at the siege of Derry and successfully commanded a force against the Inniskillingers. In February, 1690, he failed in the defence of Cavan, and at the Boyne his horse was shot from under him, trapping him for some time while he was ridden over and badly bruised until rescued by a trooper. During the siege of Limerick he commanded the cavalry, based in Cos. Clare and Galway. After the siege, Tyrconnell appointed him to supreme command of the Jacobite forces in Ireland, an unpopular choice with the army, which was anti-Tyrconnell and favoured Sarsfield, regarding Berwick as too young and too much under the influence of Tyrconnell.

When Tyrconnell returned to Ireland in January, 1691, Berwick went to France, where he had a long and distinguished career in the French army. He took part in twenty-nine campaigns, in fifteen as commander-in-chief. In one of these, at the battle of Almansa in SE Spain, on 25 April, 1707, he defeated an Anglo-Portuguese army under Henri de Ruvigny, Lord Galway, a Huguenot exile in William's army who was present at the second siege of Limerick, the only case of a French army under an English commander defeating an English army under a French commander.

In 1703, he became a naturalised Frenchman, and in 1706 was made a marshal of France. He refused to co-operate with his half-brother, King James' legitimate son, James III, the 'Old Pretender', in his attempt to regain the English throne in

1715, and was more interested in French politics than English. He was killed on 12 June, 1734, while besieging Philippsburg in Baden, Germany, where his head was taken off by a cannonball, and was buried in the church of the Hôpital des Invalides in Paris.

Berwick married Sarsfield's widow, Honora, against his father's wishes, in 1695. She died in 1698, and in 1700 he married Anne Bulkeley. He left descendants in Spain, Dukes of Liria, through his only son by his first marriage, and in France, Ducs de Fitzjames, through his second marriage.

The Memoires, to 1705, were first published by his grandson in 1777. They were continued to 1734 by the Abbé Hook, who published an English translation in 1779. Several reprints have been made. Two of his affirmations in relation to the siege, that it did not rain for a month before or for three weeks after, and that the enemy never dared to attempt to send any forces across the river, are flatly contradicted in both Jacobite and Williamite eye-witness accounts, several in the form of letters and diaries written before the outcome of the siege was known, and therefore without any axe to grind. The Jacobite author of *A Light to the Blind* stated that Berwick ordered the corn within ten miles of Limerick destroyed because of a crossing by forces under Ginkel and Kirk on 10 August. His motives appear to have been to belittle William, who gave the weather as one of the reasons for raising the siege, and to boost his own role in a successful defence in which he took little part. In his statement regarding Kilmallock, that when he got there with between 7000 and 8000 troops with intent to succour the place, he was so outnumbered by the enemy that he contented himself with observing them, he must have been thinking of Cork. Story (23 September), in his account of the siege of Cork, notes reports of Berwick designing to raise the siege and the

sending out of parties to cover him. Stevens (7 to 11 October) reports reaching Kilmallock without opposition, Berwick's arrival there on the 8th, and the destruction of the town and the countryside around by the Jacobites. Several Williamite sources report the taking of Kilmallock on 8 September, and the decision not to garrison it.

SOURCES: *Dictionary of National Biography*; J.T. Gilbert, *Jacobite Narrative of the War in Ireland, 1689-1691*, (IUP, Shannon, 1971); R. Murray, *Journal of John Stevens*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1912).



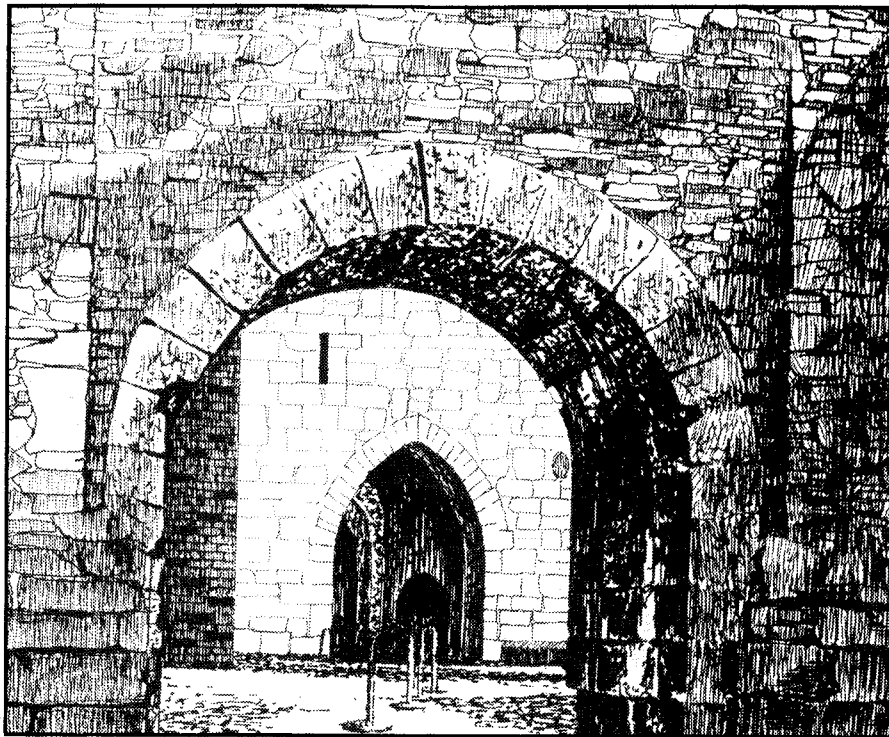
*The Duke of Berwick. Painting by
Largillière in the Musée des
Beaux-Arts, Nîmes.*



MEMOIRS

From thence [Dublin] the Duke of Tyrconnell ordered us to proceed to Limerick, which is at least sixty miles distant; every colonel was ordered to conduct his own regiment by what route he thought proper, which was executed, and very little mischief done to the country. The French, under the command of Brigadier M. de Surlaube, composed the rear, for all the rest of the French had taken the road to Cork and Kinsale in order to embark. The Duke of Tyrconnell and the Duke of Lauzun also repaired to Limerick ...

... At length the enemy began to move and proceeded from Dublin to Limerick. The same day they made their appearance, the French troops retired to Galway. We left M. de Boisseleau, a Frenchman, captain in his most Christian Majesty's guards, and major-general, to command the town, with all our Irish infantry, amounting to about twenty thousand men, of whom, however, not more than one half were armed. We kept the field with our cavalry, which might make up three thousand five hundred horse. We encamped at first five miles from Limerick on this side of the river Shannon, which passes through it, in order to keep up a free communication with the town. In this our success was complete, the enemy never daring to attempt investing it on our side, nor even to send any party across the river, which is only fordable in some parts. The place had no fortification but a wall without ramparts, and some miserable little towers without ditches. We had made a sort of covered way all round, and a kind of hornwork palisaded before the great gate, but the enemy did not attack it on that side. They opened their trenches at a distance to the left; they erected batteries, made a breach of a hundred toises, and then summoned the garrison to surrender. The Irish would not listen to the message; in consequence the Prince of Orange caused a general assault to be made with ten thousand men. The trenches not being more than two toises from the palisades, and there being no ditch, the enemy had mounted the breach before any alarm was given of the attack. The fire of a battery, which Boisseleau had formed on the inside, checked them for some little time, but they soon made their way into the town. The Irish forces advanced on every side, and charged the enemy afterwards in the streets with so much bravery that they beat them back as far as the top of the breach, where they endeavoured to make a lodgement. Brigadier Talbot, who was then in the hornwork with five hundred men, ran round the wall on the outside and, charging them in the rear, drove them out, and entering by the breach, posted himself there. In this action the enemy had two thousand men killed on



The Citadel. Drawing by Noel Fitzgerald.

the spot; on our side, there were not so many as four hundred.

The Prince of Orange seeing the ill success of this attack, and that he had lost his choicest troops in it, resolved to raise the siege. He gave out through Europe that the continual rains had been the cause of it (he alleged the same thing in his speech to the English parliament): but I can affirm that not a single drop of rain fell for above a month before, or for three weeks after.

At the time the siege was raised, there remained in Limerick not more than fifty barrels of powder, and we had not in the whole tract of Ireland which remained in subjection to us enough to double this quantity.

I had proposed to the Duke of Tyrconnell, as soon as the enemy sat down before Limerick, to pass the Shannon with our three thousand five hundred horse and destroy all the magazines they had left behind them, especially at Dublin, which would undoubtedly have reduced them to a necessity of decamping. As all the towns in this country were open and without defence, I was morally certain of succeeding in my enterprise; and as to getting back, which was objected to me as being very difficult, the knowledge I had of the country had already suggested to me by what means it might be effected, for beside that we should have had the start of the enemy, I had no doubt of making my way into the north, and returning to our quarters by Sligo. The Duke of Tyrconnell, who was become heavy and fearful, would not agree to my proposal: perhaps too there might be some degree of jealousy at the

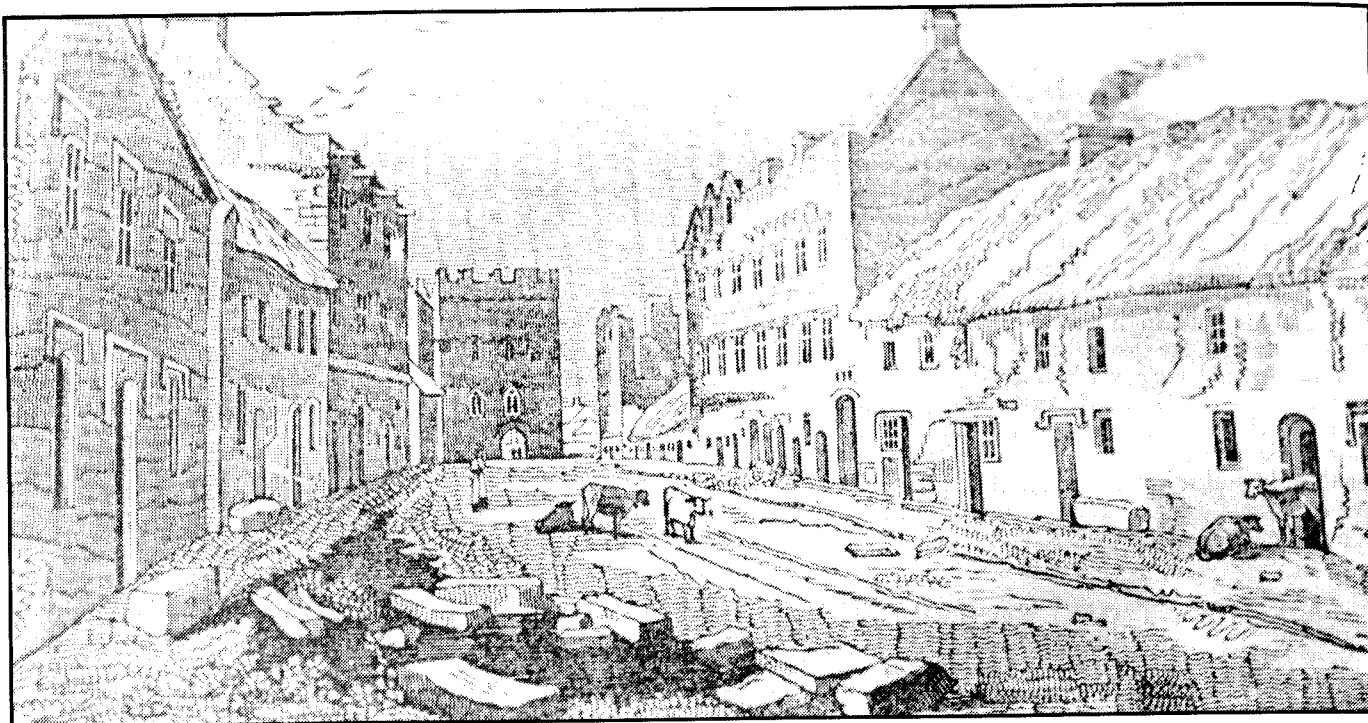
bottom on his side, for as it did not suit with the dignity of viceroy to become a partisan, and that, besides, neither his age nor bulk were accommodated to such an expedition, the whole conduct of it would have devolved upon me.

A short time after, having learned that a large convoy of artillery and ammunition was going to the camp before Limerick, he detached Brigadier Sarsfield, with eight hundred horse and dragoons, to attack it. Sarsfield fell upon them, beat the escort, and burned the convoy. This affair may have been the cause of the enemy being in want of powder and ball, which, joined to the obstinate bravery of the Irish, without doubt determined the Prince of Orange to retreat. He soon after returned to England.

[Tyrconnell went to France himself to make understood the necessity of considerable aid. Lauzun and the French troops went also. Account of character of Lauzun. Marlborough landed at Kindale, and took it and Cork].

I had, in the meantime, drawn together between seven and eight thousand men and advanced on the side of Kilmallock, with intent, if possible, to succour the place: but all the enemy's troops in that quarter being joined, I found myself so inferior in numbers that I contented myself with observing them, and when the expedition was finished, we all retired into our quarters.

[He reports on dissensions among the Irish leaders after the battle of the Boyne. Brigadier Henry Luttrell was one of the principal instigators, perpetually speaking ill of Tyrconnell and inflaming everybody against him. Sarsfield approached Berwick as



Print of Kilmallock, Co. Limerick, early 19th century.

a delegate from the anti-Tyrconnell faction, saying that they were convinced of Tyrconnell's treachery and intended to arrest him, and asking Berwick to become commander. He refused and said he would report any further cabals to the king and Tyrconnell. After the departure of Tyrconnell for France, a delegation consisting of Sarsfield, Simon Luttrell and Brigadier Dorrington told Berwick that they did not trust Tyrconnell to represent their wants sufficiently to Louis, and asked him to do it himself. Berwick forbade them to hold any further assemblies without permission, but agreed to send the bishop of Cork, the two Luttrells and Colonel Purcell to represent their views. He also sent on his own behalf Brigadier Maxwell, a Scotsman, with instructions to tell the king his reasons for sending the delegation, and asking that Henry Luttrell and Colonel Purcell not be allowed to return to Ireland, as they were sent deliberately to get them out of the way. On the ship Luttrell and Purcell proposed to throw Maxwell overboard, but were prevented by the bishop and Simon Luttrell. They were allowed to return, having threatened that anything done to them would be retaliated on Berwick by the Irish].

BERWICK ON SARSFIELD

Patrick Sarsfield was by birth a gentleman, and succeeded by the death of his elder brother to an estate of about £2000 a year. He was a man of amazing stature, utterly void of sense, very good-natured and very brave. He had served as an ensign in France, in the regiment of Monmouth, and had also been lieutenant of the life-guards in England. When the

king went over to Ireland he gave him a regiment of cavalry, and made him a brigadier. The affair of the convoy, in which he was victorious, elated him so much that he thought himself the greatest general in the world. Henry Luttrell contributed as much as possible to turn his head by incessantly praising him in all company, not out of any real esteem he had for him, but to make him popular and by that means render him subservient to his own designs. In effect, the Irish in general conceived so high an opinion of him that the king, to gratify them, created him Earl of Lucan, and in the next promotion made him major-general. After the capitulation of Limerick he went over to France, where the king gave him a troop of life-guards, and the most Christian king made him major-general. He was killed in 1693 at the battle of Neerwinden.

BERWICK ON TYRCONNELL

Richard Talbot, Duke of Tyrconnell, was a native of Ireland, of a good family. His stature was above the ordinary size. He had great experience of the world, having been early introduced into the best company and possessed of an honourable employment in the household of the Duke of York, who, upon his succession to the crown, raised him to the dignity of an earl, and, well knowing his zeal and attachment, made him soon after viceroy of Ireland. He was a man of very good sense, very obliging, but immoderately vain, and full of cunning. Though he had acquired great possessions it could not be said that he had

employed improper means, for he never appeared to have a passion for money. He had not a military genius, but much courage. After the Prince of Orange's invasion his firmness preserved Ireland, and he nobly refused all the offers that were made to induce him to submit. From the time of the battle of the Boyne he sank prodigiously, being become as irresolute in his mind as unwieldy in his person.

BERWICK ON KING WILLIAM

Whatever reason I may have not to be fond of the memory of this prince, I cannot deny him the character of a great man, and even of a great king had he not been a usurper. He had the art even from his youth to render himself almost absolute in his republic, notwithstanding the credit and authority of the de Witt's. He had a very extensive understanding, was an able politician, and was never discouraged in his pursuits whatever obstacles he might meet with. He was very rigid but not naturally cruel, very enterprising but no general. He was suspected of not having much courage; yet it must be acknowledged that at least he had courage as far as the drawing of his sword. His ambition was evident in all his intrigues to dethrone a prince who was his uncle and his father-in-law, in which he could not have succeeded but by numbers of ways as contrary to the duties of an honest man as they are repugnant to Christianity.

(Character sketches from A. Browning, *English Historical Documents*, Vol. 8, London, 1953).