IX

WILLIAM AT LIMERICK

I. JACOBITE DISSENSION

WHEN THE Jacobite leaders reached Limerick, there was much debate about future policy. Tyrconnell appears to have taken the view that the position was hopeless and that the only prudent course was to strike a bargain with William, who might be expected to offer reasonable terms for a quick Irish settlement. Evidence for this is provided not only by Charles O'Kelly, who is a hostile witness, but by the 'Light to the blind', the writer of which is a strong supporter of Tyrconnell and argues that it would have been sensible to negotiate while there was still an Irish army in being. Both sources mention Sarsfield as the leader of the die-hard party: to O'Kelly he is the 'darling of the army'; to the other he is a 'caballing gentleman'.[1]

Tyrconnell and Sarsfield were strongly contrasted figures. Tyrconnell at sixty was an experienced politician with a long record of successful negotiation; he was in bad health and, for a man unaccustomed to physical exertion, his gallant effort at the Boyne must have been a great strain. Sarsfield at forty or less was a vigorous and dare-devil cavalry commander of fine physique and attractive manner, but lacking in subtlety and, as some people thought, in brains. Berwick described him as 'a man of an amazing stature, utterly devoid of sense, very good-natured and very brave'. James told d'Avaux that Sarsfield was very

[1] O'Kelly, pp. 57–8; *Jacobite narrative*, pp. 110–11.

Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan

By courtesy of the Franciscan Fathers, Dun Mhuire, Killiney, County Dublin

brave but had no head.[2] He had all the makings of a pot-hero and was regarded as one, not only by most of his own side but by the enemy. He is the one Irishman spoken of with respect and admiration in Williamite writings: the Rommel of the Jacobite war. On his father's side he belonged to a well-known, but not aristocratic, 'old English' family. His great-grandfather had been mayor of Dublin and noted for hospitality. On his mother's side he was Gaelic Irish: she was the daughter of Rory O'More, one of the leaders of the rising of 1641.[3] This gave him an advantage over Tyrconnell, who had no Gaelic background and whose wife was English. O'Kelly, who is consistently hostile to Tyrconnell, says that after the Boyne he sent his wife to France to give a pessimistic picture of the Irish situation so as to discourage further French aid.[4]

Lauzun wrote to Seignelay that Limerick was indefensible and that he and Tyrconnell doubted whether they could avoid being made prisoners of war. He said that a number of Irish had asked for military commands, but that Tyrconnell rightly suspected that they did so only to put themselves into a favourable position for bargaining with the enemy.[5] According to Stevens a council of war was held in which Tyrconnell declared that all was lost and that the only course was to negotiate for the best terms available before it was too late. This met with indignant opposition. A group of intransigent officers took control, Tyrconnell was pushed into the background, and there was talk of turning the French out of Limerick.[6] Lauzun told Louvois that he was withdrawing the French to Galway. He did not want to keep them in Limerick in close quarters with the Irish 'who hate us so much that we fear they will play some dirty trick on us'. He proposed that when the French troops were withdrawn from Ireland extra ships should be sent to bring off the best of the Irish regiments: he would be 'sorry to see them go to

[2] Berwick, *Memoirs*, i. 173; d'Avaux, p. 519.

[3] The best life of Sarsfield is by J. H. Todhunter (1895). There are many gaps in our knowledge of Sarsfield's life. There is no evidence when he married Honora de Burgh; it may have been in the winter of 1690, when she was 15 and Sarsfield's defence of the Shannon would have brought him to the Clanricarde castle of Portumna. She later married Berwick.

[4] O'Kelly, p. 58.

[5] Lauzun to Seignelay, 16/26 July 1690 (Ranke, vi. 122–3).

[6] Stevens, p. 144.

the Prince of Orange, particularly three cavalry regiments which are excellent'.[7]

2. WILLIAM'S DILEMMA

William did not reach the neighbourhood of Limerick until more than five weeks after the Boyne; and this gave the Jacobites time to collect their scattered forces and organize the defence of the city. They were encouraged by the resistance of Athlone, which was successfully defended by Richard Grace, a veteran of the confederate war, against an attack by Lieutenant-General Douglas. When Douglas summoned him to surrender, Grace is said to have fired his pistol as a gesture of defiance and to have declared that he would hold Athlone till he had eaten his old boots. The defenders broke the bridge and retired to the Connacht side of the Shannon. Douglas had no siege guns and spent a week in fruitless operations. He then got word that Sarsfield with 15,000 men was coming to the relief of Athlone. So he marched away and rejoined the main Williamite army.[8]

Jacobite waverers were shocked by William's uncompromising attitude, expressed in a declaration made at Finglas, near Dublin, on July 7. Its terms were drawn up in consultation with the Dublin Protestants on the assumption that the Boyne had been a crushing victory and that the Jacobites were now at William's mercy. The declaration promised pardon to poor labourers, common soldiers, tradesmen and artificers who surrendered by August 1. But as for the 'desperate leaders of the rebellion', as William was now in a position to make them sensible of their errors, they were to be left to the event of war, unless by great and manifest demonstrations they convinced him that they were deserving of his mercy.[9] Southwell, who was the draftsman, explained that the scheme was 'to invite in all of the meaner sort . . . but not to be meddling with the landed men till it appears into what posture they throw themselves or into what corners they retire'. He expected that this would bring in

[7] Lauzun to Louvois, 31 July/10 Aug. 1690 (Min. guerre, A1 962, no. 155).

[8] Story, p. 102; S. Grace, *Memoirs of the family of Grace*, p. 32.

[9] Story, pp. 93–4; the policy is discussed in Simms, 'Williamite peace-tactics' in *I.H.S.* viii. 303–23.

'the bulk of the nation and that the rest will afterwards look the more abject'.[10] This attempt to drive a wedge between the common people and the landed classes was a complete failure. Douglas's army paid no attention to the declaration and freely plundered the Catholics who had put themselves under Williamite protection. Story noted that the Ulster units 'were very dexterous at that sport'. He thought that if the declaration had been honoured the Williamites would have had 20,000 fewer enemies.[11] Another Williamite account described Douglas's army as traversing the country 'like the plague of Athens, paying no regard to declaration or protection'.[12] But whether the declaration was honoured or not its terms, which gave no guarantee of property in return for surrender, had little appeal to the better-off Catholics. The Jacobite officers complained that 'this declaration was too narrow . . . and that they were obliged to stick together as being their only safety'. Story's view was that William would have preferred a more generous declaration but was obliged to consider the English interest in Ireland.[13] The Jacobite author of 'A light to the blind' came to a similar conclusion:

> But the estated gentlemen the prince excluded from his mercy. This was a foolish verdict, and the first of this kind, I believe, that ever had been; for commonly a prince, entering into a country in order to conquer it, doth in the first place encourage the principal persons to submit unto him, and when these are gained the rest do follow in course. I suppose the prince of Orange was persuaded to go against reason in favour of his great officers, who would have the Irish Catholic lords of land to be rejected from all expectation of recovering their estates, because the said officers were sure in their own conceits that the Irish army would be overcome at last, and because then they might have those lands by the prince's grant.

It was reported to France that most of the Irish officers were irritated by the declaration and were resolved to die fighting rather than accept such hard terms.[14]

It is very doubtful whether William was persuaded against his better judgement to adopt this uncompromising policy. The explanation of the Finglas declaration seems to be that William's

[10] *Finch MSS*, ii. 346.

[11] Story, pp. 94, 99.

[12] T.C.D., MS V. 4. 4, p. 131.

[13] Story, *Continuation*, p. 27.

[14] *Jacobite narrative*, pp. 105–6; *Gazette de France*, 2 Sept. 1690.

appreciation of the situation after the Boyne was much the same as James's, that all was over for the Jacobites. As Würtemberg put it: 'the enemy are completely scattered and it appears that the war in Ireland will soon be over'.[15] William and his troops thus helped to stiffen the resistance of the Jacobite army by showing that tolerable terms were not to be obtained from an immediate surrender: further resistance might enable better terms to be secured. William was disappointed by the poor response to his declaration of July 7 and on August 1 made a further declaration in which he assured those of superior rank that their lives would be spared if they submitted, and that if they were destitute they should have subsistence on a scale appropriate to their position. But this offer also was far less than the guarantee of property and religious freedom for which the Jacobites were looking, and it had virtually no effect.[16]

William's slow progress towards Limerick gave time to the Irish army to rally. On July 8, while he was still at Finglas, he got the news that the English and Dutch fleets had been defeated by the French at Beachy Head.[17] This created a highly dangerous situation, which might make his immediate return to England a matter of urgency. England was threatened with invasion, the French navy might cut off communication across the Irish Sea. Lord Carmarthen, William's principal English adviser, warned him that the French were preparing to send 28 frigates into Irish waters: if their main fleet followed, the French would be masters of the Irish Sea, William would find it very difficult to get back, and the situation would be ripe for a Jacobite rising in England. On July 7 the cabinet decided to ask William to send back part of his army and 'so far as it could be done with good manners' urged that William should himself return.[18] William had meanwhile marched south towards Waterford; he did not get the cabinet letter till July 16, when he was at Castledermot, County Kildare. He replied that he was sending back some units of cavalry and infantry: he would have to stay with his army for six or seven days more, but then intended to return to Dublin *en route* for England.[19]

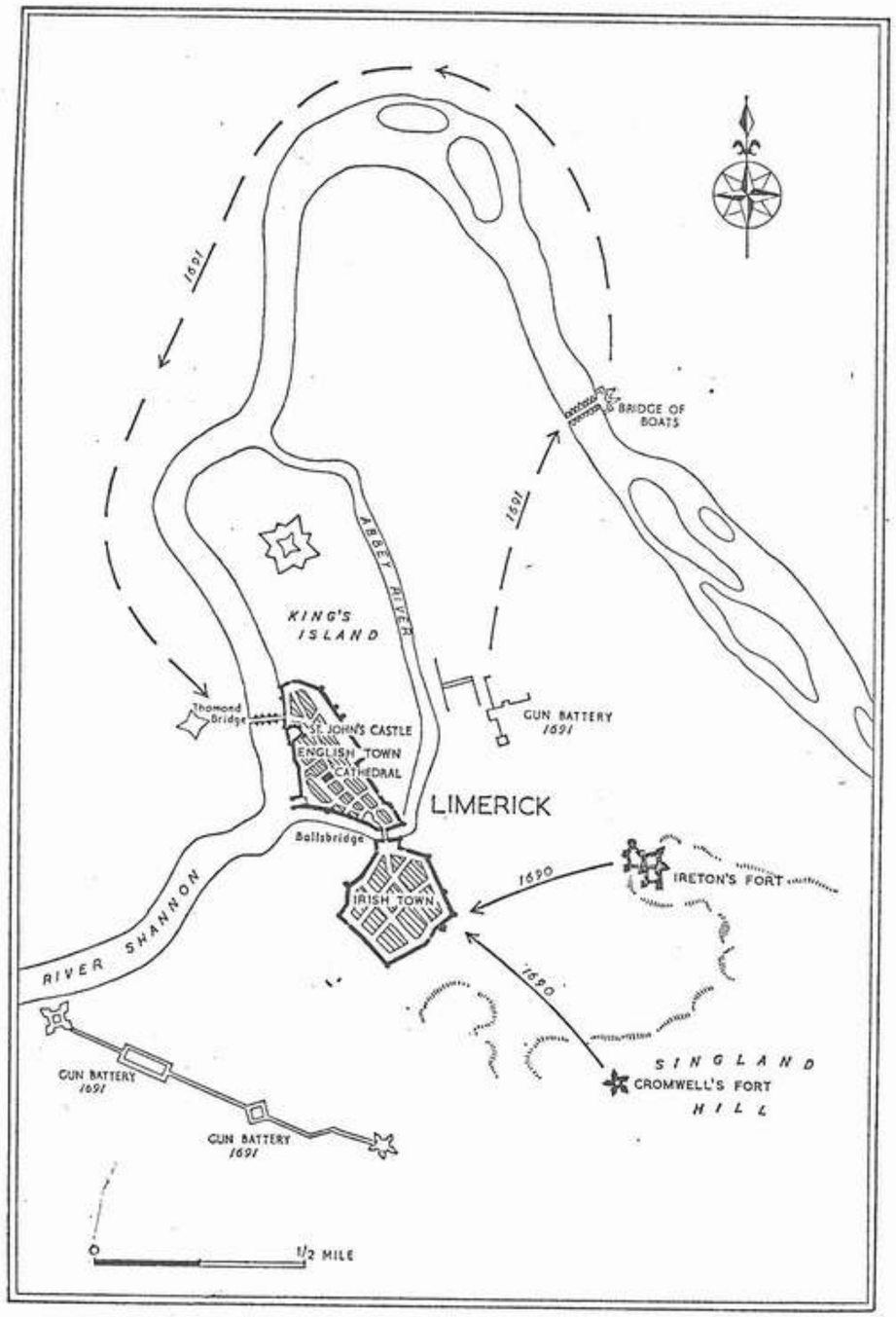
[15] *Danish force*, p. 43.
[16] *Ormonde MSS*, ii. 445–6.
[17] *Danish force*, p. 46.
[18] A. Browning, *Thomas Osborne*, ii. 174, 178; *Finch-MSS*, ii. 347–8.
[19] Ibid., p. 364.

When William got to Carrick-on-Suir, he sent Kirk forward to summon Waterford, which surrendered after some parleying; the example was followed by Duncannon, the fort that guarded the entrance to Waterford harbour. The defenders of Waterford at first asked for a guarantee of their estates and for religious liberty; this was contemptuously refused by William, who threatened to give no quarter if the city did not at once surrender. When it did so the garrison was allowed to march away and William took personal care to see that the citizens were not molested.[20] He had lost valuable time in his slow march on Waterford, but he had gained a safe port on the south coast which was to be of much assistance in the Munster campaign. He then made his way back to Dublin, intending to return to England and leave the Dutch general Solms to finish the campaign in Ireland. But when he got to Dublin there was better news. The French had burned the small fishing-village of Teignmouth, but had then returned to their fleet in Torbay; the English navy had not suffered as heavily at Beachy Head as had been feared. William decided to stay for some time longer, and he made for Limerick.[21]

3. THE DEFENCE OF LIMERICK

Limerick was a place of considerable natural strength. The main, or English, town was on an island in the Shannon linked to the Clare side by Thomond Bridge and to the Irish town on the County Limerick side by Ballsbridge, which spanned a branch of the river.[22] Both the English and Irish towns were walled, but the fortifications were old and decayed and, by the standards of the later seventeenth century, were inadequate to withstand a regular siege. In a celebrated phrase Lauzun is said to have remarked that Limerick could be taken with roasted apples. Stevens described it as 'almost defenceless; it had no other than an old stone wall made against bows and arrows'. Williamites treated the fortifications with greater respect.[23]

[20] Story, pp. 109–11; *Danish force*, pp. 65–6.
[21] *London Gazette*, 8 July 1690; Story, pp. 111–12.
[22] For the topography see map on p. 164.
[23] MacGeoghegan, *Histoire d'Irlande*, iii. 743; Stevens, p. 193; Story, p. 117; *Danish force*, p. 54.



SIEGES OF LIMERICK, 1690–1

Good use was made of the interval before William's arrival to improve the defences. A ditch was dug outside the Irish town wall with a 'covered way' – a ledge cut out of the counterscarp, or outer side of the ditch, and protected by the parapet – and a palisade. Some redoubts and other outworks were made and the suburbs cleared to deny cover to the enemy.[24] Although the French troops were withdrawn, a French major-general, Boisseleau, was left as commander of the town. He was a tough and vigorous officer who had gained experience of commanding Irish troops during the previous year. His force consisted of a regiment of cavalry, a regiment of dragoons, and 28 infantry regiments. Lauzun put the strength of the infantry at 14,000, but some of them were without arms.[25] In addition, there was a cavalry force of perhaps 2,500 under Sarsfield in County Clare. Up the Shannon was a large force of Ulstermen, most of them without arms, raised by Hugh Balldearg O'Donnell, a descendant of the chiefs of Tyrconnell who had served in the Spanish army and had reached Ireland a few days after the Boyne. His arrival created much excitement, as it was prophesied that an O'Donnell with a red mark would deliver Ireland from the English.[26] One story was that Balldearg had foretold that the English would conquer till they came to the well near Singland Hill, just outside Limerick, but that after that they would be defeated and driven out of the land. His arrival thus contributed to the raising of Irish morale, though a Williamite comment was: 'it is hard to believe how this dream had obtained among the common sort'.[27]

William's strength at Limerick was less than it had been at the Boyne, as two regiments of infantry, a regiment of horse and a regiment of dragoons had been sent to England, and other detachments had been left to garrison places already occupied. His army at Limerick may be put at about 25,000. It was still very international, including the Danish force, Huguenots, Dutch and Brandenburgers. The Williamite view was that its

[24] Stevens, p. 149.

[25] Min. guerre, A1 962, nos 167, 169.

[26] He seems to have been a great-nephew of Niall Garbh O'Donnell (see J. O'Donovan, 'The O'Donnells in exile' in *Duffy's Hiberian Magazine*, 1860, pp. 50–6, 106–7). 'Balldearg' is the Irish for 'red spot'. For Balldearg O'Donnell as folklore hero see P. O Finneadh, 'Balldearg O'Donnell' in *Béaloideas*, iii. 359–62.

[27] *Finch MSS*, ii. 407.

numbers were inadequate for a complete investment of the city.[28]

On August 7 William reached Caherconlish, about eight miles south-east of Limerick. He had only field guns with him. The heavier guns required for siege operations were still on their slow journey from Dublin, a failure in logistics which Story could explain only by supposing that an immediate surrender of the town had been counted on.[29] During the following days the approaches to Limerick were reconnoitred, and there were encounters between the Williamites and the Irish who lined the thick hedges that covered the area. Williamites could hear the enemy talking 'with their damned Irish brogue on their tongues' and shouted back 'ye toads, are ye there? We'll be with you presently'.[30] The Williamite advance was towards the south-east corner of the Irish town. Their first objective was the ridge of Singland Hill, which ran in a crescent about half a mile from the wall, from which it was separated by a belt of boggy ground. On the ridge were two forts which had been built in the Cromwellian siege of 1650–1, Ireton's fort and Cromwell's fort. The Williamites succeeded in occupying both forts and the intervening ridge without resistance from the retreating Irish. William then sent a summons to the commander to surrender. According to Story a great part of the garrison was in favour of capitulating, but Boisseleau, Sarsfield and Berwick put up a strong case for resistance; they represented that the French had landed in England with 50,000 men and that William would soon have to withdraw his army from Ireland. Boisseleau sent a bold reply that he could best earn the prince of Orange's esteem by a vigorous defence of the town entrusted to him.[31]

William had thus to make a regular siege of Limerick, and waited for the arrival of the eight heavy guns that were on their way from Dublin with an accompanying procession of carts laden with ammunition and stores. On the morning of August 11 'a substantial country gentleman' named Manus O'Brien came to the Williamite camp with the news that Sarsfield had crossed the Shannon near Killaloe with the pick of the Irish

[28] Story, p. 111; *Cal. S.P. dom., 1690–1*, p. 230.
[29] Story, p. 118.
[30] Ibid., p. 114.
[31] Ibid., p. 115.

cavalry and dragoons, his objective being the siege train. It was some time before O'Brien could get a hearing. When William eventually heard his story and ordered a party to intercept Sarsfield his orders met with near-indifference – perhaps as a result of the ill-feeling between English and Dutch which paralleled the Franco-Irish dissensions on the Jacobite side. The Williamite party did not start out till 1 or 2 a.m. on the following day, and it was not long before 'they saw a great light in the air and heard a strange rumbling noise'. Sarsfield, traditionally guided by Hogan, a famous rapparee, had brought his men through the Tipperary mountains to Ballyneety, where the siege train had encamped for the night.[32] 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.[33] It was an enterprise of skilful timing and swift execution, which was highly damaging to the enemy. He took the convoy completely by surprise; the guns had been left out in the open, most of the horses had been turned out to grass, and very few sentries were left to guard the sleeping camp. Two of the guns were split by overcharging and it appears that Sarsfield spared the life of a Williamite gunner for his technical services in this operation. But in the process other guns were dislodged from their carriages and were left intact. Tin boats for bridging the Shannon were not completely destroyed, but holes were cut in many of them. 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.[34] The carters' wives and children are said to have been among the victims, and a Williamite commentator tried to exonerate Sarsfield from personal responsibility for

[32] Ibid., pp. 119–21; Todhunter, *Life of Patrick Sarsfield*, pp. 88–94. There are two places called Ballyneety in County Limerick. This one is 14 miles south-east of Limerick.
[33] *Gazette de France*, 9 Sept. 1690, which gives a full, and somewhat inflated, account; *Coll. Hib.*, iii. 133 (reports received by the Vatican from Amsterdam and Brussels).
[34] *Finch MSS*, ii. 412; *Danish force*, pp. 55–6; R. Davies, *Journal*, p. 137; Story, p. 120. 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'.

this.[35] O Bruadair praised Sarsfield's exploit with pardonable poetic licence:

> He left not a bomb or a copper pontoon
> In Baile an Fhaoitigh that he did not disperse
> Like the smoke of a candle up into the sky.[36]

The feat added greatly to Sarsfield's reputation, encouraged Irish morale, and was an invaluable support to the policy of resistance. According to O'Kelly it was less welcome to Tyrconnell, Lauzun and their partisans. It was a setback for the peace party, and the French feared that they would be kept longer in Ireland.[37] It was a severe blow to the Williamites, though in view of the shaky state of opinion in England the *London Gazette* tempered the bad news with the comforting assurance: 'this accident will only lose us three or four days, for in that time our cannon (being 24-pounders) will arrive from Waterford; in the meantime our batteries are preparing and all things are put in a posture for a vigorous attack of the town'.[38] In fact Ballyneety had badly upset the transport arrangements and the guns from Waterford did not arrive until ten days after. The delay, and even more so the loss of ammunition, were to have serious consequences for the Williamites.

Six guns salvaged from Ballyneety arrived on August 16, and during the following days the Williamites made trenches between the Singland ridge and the wall of the Irish town, and set up a battery. The Irish were pushed back from their advanced positions, though there was hard fighting before they were driven from a redoubt near the south-east corner of the wall.[39]

With the arrival of the heavy guns from Waterford the Williamites pushed their batteries nearer and nearer to the wall. This involved moving the guns across low-lying ground, which was practicable only because the season had up to then been unusually dry. Their advance was protected by woolsacks, a device introduced by Meesters, the Dutch comptroller of

[35] Parker, *Memoirs*, p. 26.
[36] O Bruadair, iii. 149.
[37] O'Kelly, p. 64.
[38] *London Gazette*, 25 Aug. 1690.
[39] *Danish force*, pp. 67–71; Story, pp. 122–4.

artillery, 'an excellent artist'.[40] August 25 brought a change in the weather. That day Sir Robert Southwell wrote: 'this morning it began to pour down at such a furious rate that some of our trenches have been two feet deep. I find by this one day's fierce rain a strange damp as to our success among many of the chief officers and that our army must draw off or be ruined if the rain should hold; nay that it would be a great task in these deep ways to get off our cannon.' He added that William himself 'in his dark and reserved way' had hinted that he was thinking of going back to England.[41] When the rain cleared the bombardment began, supplemented by carcasses (a form of incendiary bomb) and red-hot shot, which started a number of fires in the town. The defenders tried to protect the wall with woolsacks, but to no purpose; a breach was made, which according to Story was twelve yards wide. Boisseleau, the French commander, says that the breach was forty-two yards wide and that he made a retrenchment behind it, on which he mounted guns.[42]

On the afternoon of August 27 the Williamites assaulted the breach. Stevens gives a vivid account of how his regiment was led into the breach by Boisseleau himself. They could see the red-coats pouring in and at first thought that they were their own men retreating, till they noticed the green boughs that distinguished the Williamites. The Irish who had been driven from the counterscarp at first retreated hurriedly, but they were held up by dragoons and then rallied. Stevens's regiment fired effectively from the retrenchment and drove the Williamites out of the breach.[43] The French account pays tribute to this regiment and also to 'four hundred Irish of MacMahon's regiment who had no arms and threw stones, which gave considerable trouble to the enemy'.[44] Story corroborates the account and adds that the defence was assisted by 'broken bottles from the very women, who boldly stood on the breach and were nearer our men than their own'. The Danish envoy gave a similar account: 'the very women, prone as they are to violent passions,

[40] Southwell to Nottingham, 22 Aug. 1690 (*Finch MSS*, ii. 427). Meesters had escaped death at Ballyneety by throwing himself into a bed of nettles (ibid., p. 412).
[41] Ibid., p. 428.
[42] Story, p. 128; *Gazette de France*, quoted in *Jacobite narrative*, p. 264.
[43] Stevens, pp. 177–81.
[44] *Gazette de France*, loc. cit.

have since then become more furious; it was noted that in the attack on the counterscarp they caused as much, indeed more, damage than the garrison by throwing huge stones on the assailants, of whom a great number thus perished'.[45] After some hours' hard fighting the Williamites were driven back with heavy losses. Their casualties, killed and wounded, for the day were estimated at over 2,300.[46] On the following day, August 28, they continued to fire at the breach, but rain set in again and anxious consultations took place about a withdrawal. It was pointed out that if there was more rain the guns could not be got away and that 'the watery season would undoubtedly bring the country distemper'.[47] In any case the breach was not wide enough and, even if the Irish town were taken, the English town on its island would remain to be tackled. Würtemberg urged that the bombardment should be intensified and the breach widened. He was told that there were no more cannon-balls; with the last convoy unfilled bombs had been sent instead of balls. Ammunition that was to be shipped from London had never left, 'the French being masters of the Channel'.[48] George Clarke made a similar point: 'the ill success at Limerick is well known to be owing to the want of ammunition occasioned by Sarsfield falling upon the artillery . . . so that after a fruitless attack of a breach which we had not powder and shot to make larger the king left the army'.[49]

On August 29 it was decided to raise the siege, and next day William took the road for Waterford, a disappointed man. The withdrawal of his army was less than orderly: sick and wounded hastily evacuated, bombs and grenades abandoned with a fuse to blow them up. Stevens has a macabre account of a burning hospital full of wounded men.[50] When he reached London William wrote to the prince of Waldeck, captain-general in the Netherlands, to explain the disappointing conclusion to his Irish campaign. He had attacked Limerick rather than the easier objectives of Cork and Kinsale in the hope of completing the

[45] Story, p. 129; Fouleresse to Christian V, 29 Aug. 1690 (*N. & Q.*, 5th ser., viii. 123).

[46] *Danish force*, pp. 73–4.

[47] *Finch MSS*, ii. 435; Mullenaux, *Journal of the three months royal campaign*, p. 26.

[48] *Danish force*, p. 74; Burnet, iv. 102.

[49] *Leyland-Popham MSS*, p. 276.

[50] Story, p. 133; Stevens, p. 185.

conquest of Ireland: if Limerick with its strong garrison was taken, other places would fall of themselves. But the assault on the breach had failed; the excessive zeal of the assault troops and the strength of the enemy's retrenchment had thrown out the plan of attack. After that setback the lateness of the season and the prospect of continued rain made withdrawal inevitable; otherwise it would have been impossible to get away the heavy guns. The disappointment was the greater because, had it not been for a series of minor mishaps, the enterprise would infallibly have succeeded: but 'the good God did not will it', and William had been unable to finish the business and so was not yet in a position to give the full measure of assistance to his friends on the continent – the reason for which he had taken risks that he would not otherwise have taken.[51] Berwick later observed sarcastically that William told all Europe that continual rains had made him raise the siege: 'but I can affirm that not a single drop of rain fell for above a month before or for three weeks after'.[52]

William's conduct of the siege was subjected to some criticism: it was argued that he should have sent part of his army across the Shannon, and that he should have cut the Irish communications by breaking the Thomond Bridge on the Clare side and Ballsbridge between the English and Irish towns. On his behalf it was urged that his army was too small for such operations and that, if the Shannon rose, part of it might be cut off.[53] It was also feared that the French troops might return from Galway to reinforce the Irish.[54] Plans to bring Sir Cloudesly Shovell and a naval squadron into the Shannon were held up by postal delays and adverse winds, and Shovell did not leave the English coast till after the siege was raised and the French had left Galway.[55]

Stevens paid tribute to the bravery and resolution of the Irish, and explained why French and Irish attitudes to the defence of Limerick were so different: the French with their

[51] Ranke, vi. 278.

[52] Berwick, i. 79. His memoirs are not accurate on points of detail. Apart from Williamite references to bad weather Stevens refers to it. For a lively account of Williamite army reaction to Limerick weather see Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, p. 295.

[53] Story, pp. 134–5.

[54] *N. & Q.*, loc. cit., p. 122.

[55] *Finch MSS*, ii. 414, 453.

experience of continental fortifications thought Limerick untenable and refused to stay in it; the Irish had never seen a well-fortified town and thought Limerick impregnable.[56] The brunt of the fighting was borne by the infantry of the garrison. Apart from the Ballyneety exploit the cavalry did little to harry the Williamites or relieve the pressure on the town. The infantry fought with spirit and tenacity and gave an account of themselves that must have astonished those who had seen them broken at the Boyne. The defence of Limerick restored their self-respect and revived a feeling of optimism, which Boisseleau is said to have tried to damp with a rather ungracious speech:

> With much ado he had persuaded them to defend themselves, which with God's help they had done; but he assured them that it was not fear but prudence and policy that had made the enemy quit the siege . . . and withal he told them his opinion that the next time the enemy came they would have it.[57]

4. THE FRENCH LEAVE IRELAND

Limerick was a notable success for the Irish, won by their own courage and energy. It justified the stand taken by the resistance party and prolonged the war for over a year. Tyrconnell and the French, who had presumed that Limerick would fall, had now to modify their position. By August 24 Lauzun was contemplating the possibility that Limerick might hold out. He was still making plans to take six or seven thousand of the garrison to France. He had sounded Sarsfield and thought that he too would come if Limerick capitulated; but if it were not taken he thought that Sarsfield would keep up a guerrilla war as best he could without a regular army, which could not be formed or maintained in the prevailing conditions. The French troops were at Galway ready to sail, but he had postponed embarkation so as not to discourage the defenders of Limerick.[58]

After the siege was raised, Tyrconnell wrote to Louvois that the situation had been transformed, and that it would no longer be practicable to send an Irish force to France. He thought that resistance in Ireland could be kept up till the following spring

[56] Stevens, p. 194.
[57] Story, p. 133.
[58] Min. guerre, A1 962, no. 167.

and was making arrangements for the government while he himself went to France to report to James.[59] He and the French sailed about September 12, leaving the civil government in charge of twelve commissioners and the army in charge of the twenty-year-old Berwick who was to be advised by a military council, on which Sarsfield had the last place. O'Kelly suggested that Tyrconnell would have preferred to leave Sarsfield out altogether but was afraid of an army revolt.[60]

According to O'Kelly there was general surprise that Tyrconnell and Lauzun should have decided to leave Ireland when the Jacobite prospects appeared so much brighter. The reaction in Paris was much the same: 'most of the people cannot understand why, since the siege of Limerick has been raised, Tyrconnell and the French soldiers chose to leave Ireland'.[61] It is not difficult to understand Lauzun's decision. He was disgusted with Ireland: it was purgatory to be there; he had rather drive a gun-carriage in France. His orders were to withdraw his troops to France, the escorting fleet was waiting and no countermanding orders had been received.[62] Tyrconnell was no less weary of the obstruction and hostility that faced him in Ireland. His enemies intended to undermine his credit with James and he thought it prudent to get a start of them.[63]

[59] *Anal. Hib.*, xxi. 203–4.
[60] O'Kelly, p. 72.
[61] *Coll. Hib.*, iii. 136.
[62] Min. guerre, A1 962, no. 160.
[63] *James II*, ii. 420–2.