

WAR IN IRELAND

1689

On Saturday in the evening it was ordered that a colonel and a brigadier should go the rounds, and stay in the camp all night, to see the guards all right, to inquire what officers lay out of the camp, and to acquaint the general with it; and because they found there was abundance of sick men that neither could march, nor was there room for them in the ships, therefore wagons were ordered to be ready at the bridge-end next morning to carry them all to Carlingford and Newry. The colonels, lieutenant-colonels, and majors of each regiment were ordered to be there, and see their sick men taken care of, and to give them money; there was also an officer out of each regiment appointed with a guard to attend them.

Next morning the poor men were brought down from all places towards the bridge-end, and several of them died by the way, the rest were put upon wagons, which was the most lamentable sight in the world, for all the roads from Dundalk to Newry and Carlingford were next day full of nothing but dead men, whoever as the wagons jolted, some of them died, and were thrown off as fast. The general very seldom used to be away from the church, but that day he was for some hours at the bridge-end, to see all the care taken for the men that could be, and was very much displeased that all the field-officers were not so careful as he had given command they should. The ships were then filling with sick, and as many dying on that side: they were ordered to go into deep water, and sail with the first fair wind for Belfast. The weather all this while was very dismal, and yet we were obliged to stay till both the ships were got into deep water, and the sick gone by land, lest when we were gone, the enemy should spoil our ships, and kill our men.

Monday the fourth of November it was ordered, that all who had any sick men on board, should send an ensign with ten men to take care of them; and if the men wanted anything, they were to send to Mr. Shales for it. The tents that were by the waterside were to be taken on board to keep the sick men warm, and every regiment was to have the same number again that they brought thither. The fifth it was confirmed that the enemy were gone to quarters, and the sixth we had orders to march. Next day Stuart, Herbert, Gower, and Zancy, (formerly my lord Lovelace's), toward Newry; Hammer, Deering, Drogheda, Beaumont, Warton, Bellasis, (before the duke of Norfolk's), and Roscommon, were to march towards Armagh; major general Kirk, and the Dutch were to go by Newry, and so down to Antrim. The soldiers were ordered six days' bread and a fortnight's subsistence. I remember next morning, as we were marching off, word was brought to us that the enemy was approaching; and, God knows, we were in a very weak condition to resist them, those that were best being scarce able to carry their arms; however they were very hearty, and began to unbuckle their tents at the news, and said: "If they came, they should pay for our lying in the cold so long." But it proved only a small party who took two or three of our men prisoners as they were straggling.

Thursday the seventh of November, the regiments above-named marched; the hills as we went along being all covered with snow, (for what was rain in the valley, was snow on the mountains); several that were not able to march up, were forced to be left, and so died; and all of us had but indifferent lodgings that night, amongst the ruins of the old houses at Newry. So little did the poor men value dying, that some of them being in a stable overnight, the next day two were dead; and the rest entreating me to get a fire, which I did, coming about two hours after, they had pulled in the two dead men to make seats of.

The ninth day the rest of our army marched from Dundalk, the duke giving orders first to burn some arms and provisions that could not be got off, because the wagons were employed to carry the men; and some few sick men were left that could not be removed, those were at the mercy of the enemy, who did not use them ill, but buried the several that were dead. At their first coming to Dundalk, they removed the corpses of our three dead colonels out of my lord Bedlow's vault, and buried them nigh the church door, but did not abuse them as was reported....

The army at our decamping, was dispersed all over the North to winter quarters, which were but very indifferent; and what with coming to warm firesides with some, and others having little or no shelter to secure them, and very little provisions, the country being all wasted and destroyed, (nor was it possible to send provisions everywhere till storehouses were fixed). And then most of the men being very weak before they left the camp, and marching in the cold and wet to come to those places, we had more that died when they came to quarters, than died in the camp....

I doubt not, but most people will be curious to know how many died this campaign, and in quarters, and what could be the occasion of such mortality;... whatever the world may think, yet I can attribute those distempers among us to nothing else but the badness of the weather, the moistness of the place, the unacquaintedness of the English to hardships, and indeed their lazy carelessness; for I remember a regiment of Dutch that encamped at the end of the town, were so well hutted, that not above eleven of them died the whole campaign; but it's the same thing with the

English whenever you take them first out of their own country as it was here; and let men be in other things never so happy, if they have courage, and know the use of their arms, yet when they come upon duty, if they have not bodies inured to hardships, they lie under a great disadvantage. But in truth we scarce have been more unfortunate either in a place or in the weather than while we were there; for it would often rain all day upon us when there was not one drop in the enemies' camp; this they used to call a judgment, but it was because we lay in a hollow at the bottoms of the mountains, and they upon a high sound ground. The enemy did not at first die so fast as we did, because they were born in the country and were used to bad lying and feeding, but before they decamped they were nigh as ill as we, and an abundance died after they got to quarters.

One thing I cannot omit, and that is, that is, that our surgeons were very ill provided with drugs, having in their chests only some little things for wounds, but little or nothing that might be useful against the flux and the fever, which were the two raging distempers among us; and yet I cannot but think that the fever was partly brought to our camp by some of those people that came from Derry, for it was observable that after some of them came amongst us, it was presently spread over the whole army, yet I did not find many of themselves died of it.

As to the number of our men that died, I am sure there were not above 1.600 or 1.700 that died in or about Dundalk; but our ships came from Carlingford and Dundalk about the thirteenth of November to Belfast, and there were shipped at those two places 1.970 sick men, and not 1.100 of those came ashore, but died at sea; nay, so great was the mortality, that several ships had all the men in them dead, and nobody to look after them while they lay in the bay at Carickfergus. As for the great hospital at Belfast, there were 3.762 that died in it from the first of November to the first of May, as appears by the tallies given in by the men that buried them: there were several that had their limbs so mortified in the camp, and afterward, that some had their toes, and some their whole feet that fell off as the surgeons were dressing them; so that upon the whole matter, we lost nigh one half of the men that we took over with us....

1690

...Upon the road as we marched there was a soldier hanged for deserting, and a boy for being a spy and a murderer; the story of this boy is very remarkable, which was thus: about three weeks before we took the field, one of my lord Drogheda's sergeants was gathering wood-sorrel nigh his quarters at Tandrogee, this boy comes to him and tells him, if he'll go along, he would take him to a place hard by, where he might get several good herbs; he follows the boy, and is taken by five or six Irish men that were armed. They take him to a little house and bind him, but after some good words untie his hands, but withal kept him a prisoner, designing to carry him to Dundalk next day; he endeavors in the night to make his escape, and did it, though they pursued him and wounded him in several places, the boy himself being one of the forwardest. Next week the same boy was at Legacory, where he was telling some dragoons, that if they would go along with him, he would take them to a place where they might get several horses and a good prey of cattle; they were very ready to hearken to him, when at the same time one of my lord Drogheda's soldiers going that way by chance, knew the boy, (for he had been often in their quarters) and having heard the story of the sergeant, told it the dragoons; upon which the boy was seized, and after some time confessed, that at the last Dundalk camp he had gone frequently between the two armies, that he had trapped several, and had half a crown brass money for every one that he could bring in; that he could observe as he went among our regiments how they lay, and what condition they were in, both as to health and other matters; that he had lately stabbed a dragoon, in at the back, as his father held him in talk, and that his father would give him nothing but the dragoon's hat and waistcoat, which he had then on. All this I have heard the boy say, and much more to the same purpose, he spoke English and Irish both very well, he was brought prisoner to this place; and upon the march, after he had received sentence of death, he proffered for a brass six-pence to hang a country man that was a prisoner for buying the soldier's shoes; and when he came to be hanged himself, he was very little concerned at it.

...As the army was marching through Ardee, a French soldier happened to be very sick with drinking water, and despairing to live, plucked out his beads and fell to his prayers; which one of the Danes seeing, shot the French man dead, and took away his musket without any further ceremony. There were none of the Irish to be seen but a few poor starved creatures who had scraped up some of the husks of oats nigh a mill, to eat instead of better food. It's a wonder to see how some of those creatures live; I myself have seen them scratching like hens among the cinders for victuals;...

We had at that time an account from Cork that on the twenty-second of November last there were sixty of our horse and foot, who met with near five hundred of the rapparees, in the barony of West Carberry near Castlehaven; our men at that disadvantage retreated toward Castlehaven, the enemy followed in the rear, and fired at a distance several times, our party facing about killed nine; and afterward being attacked again, they killed one Brown, an ensign of the enemies. The enemy next day besieged Castletown, a house near Castlehaven; they were commanded

by O'Donavan, O'Driscoll, and one Barry. As they approached the house, our men killed twelve of them; this put them into an humor of retreating, though one Captain Mackronine with his sword drawn endeavored to hinder them; but he and some more of the party being killed, the rest got away as well as they could. Several of them had bundles of straw fastened upon their breasts instead of armor; but this was not proof, for about thirty of them were killed upon the spot, among whom were young Colonel O'Driscoll, Captain Tiegge O'Donavan, besides several that went off wounded; we lost only two men.

At this time Colonel Byerley being at Mountmelick with part of his own regiment, and some of Colonel Earl's foot, he was frequently alarmed; as well by parties of the Irish army, as by considerable numbers of the rapparees, who had a design to burn the town, as they had done several others thereabouts; but the colonel was very watchful, and kept good intelligence (a main matter in this affair). He was told of a party that designed to burn the town; and he took care to have all his men, both horse and foot, in readiness to welcome them; but they heard of his posture and durst not venture; however on the third of December, he had notice of a body of rapparees, that were not far from the town, and designed him a mischief; he sends out Lieutenant Dent with twenty horse, and ordered each horseman to take a musketeer behind him; when the horse came almost within sight of the rapparees, they dropped their foot, who marched closely behind the hedges unperceived by the enemy. When the enemy espied so small a party of horse, they advanced from the side of the bog towards them; the horse seemed to retreat a little, till the rapparees were advanced within musket shot of our foot, who firing amongst them, killed several, and then Lieutenant Dent fell in with his horse; as also the foot charged them a second time, that after some resistance they killed thirty-nine, and took four, whom they hanged without any further ceremony. The rest escaped to the bogs, and in a moment all disappeared; which may seem strange to those that have not seen it, but something of this kind I have seen myself; and those of this party assured me, that after the action was over, some of them looking about amongst the dead, found one Dun, a sergeant of the enemies, who was lying like an otter, all under water in a running brook, (except the top of his nose and his mouth); they brought him out, and although he proffered forty shillings in English money to save his life (a great ransom as he believed), yet he was one of the four that was hanged. When the rapparees have no mind to show themselves upon the bogs, they commonly sink down between two or three little hills, grown over with long grass, so that you may as soon find a hair as one of them. They conceal their arms thus; they take off the lock and put it in their pocket, or hide it in some dry place; they stop the muzzle close with a cork and the touch-hole with a small quill, and then throw the piece itself into a running water or a pond; you may see a hundred of them without arms, who look like the poorest, humblest slaves in the world, and you may search till you are weary before you find one gun; but yet when they have a mind to mischief, they can all be ready in an hour's warning, for everyone knows where to go and fetch his own arms, though you do not....

The rapparees by this time were got to the end of the bog of Allen, about twelve miles from Dublin (this bog is the largest in Ireland, for it reaches through a great part of the country, from hence as far as Athlone, and is at least forty miles in length, having several islands full of woods in the midst of it). These robbed and plundered the country all about, for they had an island on this end of the bog, which they fortified, coming out in the night, and doing all the mischief they could. This being so nigh Dublin, it made a great noise, so that Colonel Fouks with his own regiment, part of Colonel Cutts's, and some of the militia marched out toward them; and coming near them in the night at a place called Tougher Greggs at the entrance of the bog of Allen, he stayed there till it was light, and then advanced upon the causeway, (having three field-pieces along with him). The Irish at first seemed to defend the place, but as we went forward, they quitted their posts, leaving our men to fill up the trenches they had made across the causeway, (being twelve in number). Colonel Fouks marched his horsemen over, and so went to the island of Allen, where he found Lieutenant-Colonel Piper, who had passed thither on the other side at the same rate. The Irish betook themselves to the woods, and we only got some little things they had left. It's thought they had a thousand foot thereabouts besides some horse, though most of them that made this disturbance at this place, were only two hundred boys, with an old Tory their commander.

G. Story. *An Impartial History of the Wars of Ireland with a Continuation Thereof* (London: 1693).