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# The True Witness



Vol. No. 34 MONTREAL, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1908 PRICE FIVE CENTS

## Historic Field of Aughrim

Besides the historic memories which cling to Athlone and the country around it, because of its siege, the Williamite war, there are other and scarcely less interesting traditions which preserve for it a place in Irish history. The little village of Lissoy, some eight or nine miles north of the town, in the County of Westmeath, and close to the Longford border, is famed as the boyhood home of Oliver Goldsmith, and Lissoy itself is the reputed scene of his well-known poem, "The Deserted Village." It is situated in a district notable for quiet pastoral beauty more than for anything of the picturesque or romantic, beyond what Goldsmith has invested it with.

### THE SCENE OF THE LAST GREAT STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE CATHOLICS AND WILLIAM OF ORANGE.

Some twenty-one miles to the southwest of Athlone, and within five miles of Ballinasloe, is Aughrim, the scene of the last great struggle between the Irish Catholic forces and the army of William of Orange, before the siege and Treaty of Limerick, and the Sailing of Sarsfield and his army to France. The brave but impetuous and over-confident French officer, St. Ruth, whose want of caution and error of judgment at the siege of Athlone had cost the Irish army so dearly and given victory to William's general, Ginckle, regretted his error when it was too late. The traditions still existing in the locality, as well as the records at the time, declare that St. Ruth and the gallant Sarsfield almost came to deadly combat as a result of St. Ruth's criminal blunder in allowing the British to enter Athlone. The altercation became so bitter between them that where both should have been united in council they were absolutely divided, Sarsfield feeling exceedingly angry that the Frenchman should have been so negligent at a critical time.

St. Ruth, on the other hand, was chastened considerably by the costly reverse which he had met and recognized that to himself alone was due the British triumph at Athlone. The estrangement between himself and Sarsfield was in no small degree responsible for the succeeding reverse to the Irish army at Aughrim, which at first gave promise of being a magnificent victory for the Irish forces, and would have wiped out the disaster at Athlone, but which subsequently developed, because of the death of St. Ruth, into the utter rout of the Irish army. St. Ruth, on his march from Limerick to Athlone, a short time previously, had singled out the vicinity of Aughrim as what he regarded as the finest battlefield in Europe, and to it he decided to retreat, meeting with the reverse at Athlone, France for his negligence, and filled with rage and mortification at the disaster which had followed, he resolved to stake all on a pitched battle with the British.

### SELECTING THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

Tyrconnell, who had marched from Limerick to St. Ruth's assistance, protested against St. Ruth's intention, but St. Ruth would not give way and so Tyrconnell marched back again to Limerick. St. Ruth gathered his army, which numbered, despite their defeat at Athlone, some fifteen thousand foot and two thousand horse and dragoons. The British force numbered nearly twenty-five thousand men and a formidable force of artillery, while the Irish had but nine field pieces. St. Ruth marched by way of Milton Pass toward Ballinasloe, which stands on the river Suck, some five miles above its confluence with the Shannon, and in the County of Galway. His cavalry covered the retreat, but he was not pursued by the British. He posted his army along by the fords of the Suck, as if he intended to fight at Ballinasloe, but his previous knowledge of the country determined him to select the ground near Aughrim for the battle.

His fatal blunder at Athlone had discouraged his Irish soldiers, many of whom were unwilling to trust themselves to his judgment again in battle. But although rash and negligent at a critical time, St. Ruth was nevertheless a brave soldier, and he had staked everything on the fight at Aughrim. He defiled his army along the slopes of Kilmocomodan Hill, where he established his camp on the eastern side of the hill facing toward Garbally and Ballinasloe. Kilmocomodan at that time was very nearly surrounded by red bog. On the front, by which Ginckle, the Williamite general, must approach, ran a small stream with several branches, which made the morass impracticable for horses and very difficult for infantry. This section is all now meadow land, but when that execution the country is exactly as it was at the period of the battle. The hill is something more than a mile in length and about

three hundred and fifty feet high. RUINS OF AUGHRIM CASTLE. An old castle, the ruins of which still stand, commanded the narrow and difficult pass at the base of the hill. The road ran by Kilmocomodan Abbey and the village of the same name, by which the French still call the battle, to Athenry, Loughrea and Galway. The other pass, or causeway, ran through Urachroe connecting with Ballinasloe by way of Eyrecourt and Banagher bridge, as well as by a second route with Portumma. These were the routes by which the Irish army intended to retreat in case they were defeated.

### THE RUSE OF THE IRISH SUCCESSFUL.

Ginckle ordered his infantry forward after sounding the intervening morass, and threw his forces against the Irish center. They were received by the Irish concealed behind the nearest hedges, and after a sharp fight the Irish retreated to the next line of defence, behind the second line of hedges. By a repetition of these tactics the Irish drew the Williamite infantry gradually up the slope of the hill from the bog, and beyond the point where they could be safely supported by the Williamite cavalry. The retreat of the Irish was so slow and systematic from one hedge row to the next that the Williamites believed the Irish were in steady retreat until they suddenly found themselves face to face with the main body of the Irish army, who charged them in front and rushed around on their flanks through the open passages or gaps which St. Ruth had previously cut in the hedges for that purpose.

The result was that the British forces were thrown into utter confusion. They made a rush to get back to their own camp, but were cut down in the morass and forced into a deadly fight by the Irish infantry, while they were endeavoring to get back to their own lines. Two of their colonels, Earle and Herbert, were taken prisoners, Earle being again retaken by his own side and finally rescued. Further along the Irish line in the direction of Aughrim the Williamites had a similar experience, though their loss there was not so severe as it was where they were not caught in the bog. St. Ruth witnessing their discomfiture, cried out with the enthusiasm of his countrymen, "The day is ours, mes enfants," as he saw the combined British, Dutch, Danish, German and Huguenot artillery, accounted the best in Europe, flying before the Irish charge. That ended the fighting for that night.

### THE ORANGEMEN AND THE BOYNE.

But Ginckle determined to renew the attack at the earliest possible moment. The next day was Sunday, July 12. It is a somewhat peculiar circumstance that the annual celebration of the battle of the Boyne, which is observed even up to this day by the Orangemen in Ireland, and elsewhere, is absolutely misplaced as to date. While intending to celebrate the battle of the Boyne at Aughrim, which took place more than a hundred miles to the westward and twelve days later than the battle of the Boyne, which was fought on July 1.

The fighting was renewed at an early hour on Sunday morning. Ginckle's seasoned veterans, most of whom had fought the continental wars, numbered from twenty-five to thirty thousand men, comprising seventy regiments, besides his artillery, while the Irish forces did not number more than half as many. Ginckle marshaled his army in two lines of battle, the infantry in the front line massed toward the center, and the cavalry on the flanks, supported by his cannon. The Irish army, outside of the comparatively small number of officers and men on sentry duty, assisted at Mass, the chaplains of the regiments officiating at the altars.

### WILLIAM'S VETERAN GENERALS REPULSED.

Suddenly the order to advance was given to the British army, and instantly the Irish soldiers rushed to their horses and prepared for battle. St. Ruth addressed them, calling upon them in the name of their country and liberty, and in the name of the God who would give them victory or death in the fight on which they were entering. The British continued to advance while the fog from the river for a time shut out the two armies from sight of each other, until it finally rolled away and the armies confronted each other, nothing but the stretch of bog between them. The Irish shouted their defiance to the Williamites, who in turn shouted back, until it was apparent that the fight would be to the death. Ginckle manoeuvred towards Urachroe so as to give his artillery a better chance away from the bog, his first charge being made by a Danish troop on an sicket. They were repulsed, however, and one after another—Cunningham's dragoons, Eppinger's cavalry and Lord Portland's horse, all commanded by the veteran general Holzapfel, were driven back by the Irish outposts.

To know is to prevent.—If the miners who work in cold water most of the day would rub their feet and legs with Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil they would escape muscular rheumatism and render their other limbs proof against the ill effects of exposure to cold. Those setting out for mining regions would do well to provide themselves with a supply before starting.

## REMEMBER

Monday, March 2nd, 1908  
C. M. B. A. Branch 232  
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Ash Wednesday. The whole Catholic Church has solemnly adhered to this rule from time immemorial, and begins on Ash Wednesday—just forty days, leaving the Sundays out. When people observe this holy time as a religious practice, they are not only doing good to themselves, but also to the souls of the living and the dead. The custom of sprinkling the forehead with ashes on Ash Wednesday is a somewhat surprising and interesting history. In primitive times ashes were not placed on the heads of every one indiscriminately. Public penitents alone were sprinkled with them. The ceremony took place at the church door. As the ashes fell on the head of the penitent, he heard these words: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and back to dust thou shalt return." Do penance, that you may possess everlasting life." There was always sympathy for these public sinners, and soon their friends came and received the ashes with them, but to the latter the words, "Do penance," etc., were not addressed, as they were not considered sinners. Gradually the number of sympathizers grew until finally, in the course of time, the whole congregation was sprinkled with ashes, as symbolical of man's origin and last end.

"Dust thou art, to dust returneth. 'Twas not spoken of the soul."

We have thus seen that Lent, as we now have it, is an old institution. It sprang into existence when faith was strong, when religious teachings were thought more of than worldly principles of wisdom, greatness, or renown—when the world was governed by men whom all acknowledge to have been immeasurably our superiors in imitating the conduct and following in the blessed footsteps of Him whom we call Master. The custom which they brought into vogue was by no means an empty theory, for the betterment of life, but a severe reality. With them fasting meant fasting, not a useless desire to give up articles of food; abstaining from pleasures meant just as it reads, not donning a sombre looking gown, appearing sad on public occasions, or staying indoors when there is any possibility of gaining a little credit by so doing. Early Christianity presented no sentimentalism, no sham, no merely outward appearances. Primitive Catholics were in earnest, as their divine Master was in earnest; they believed with Him that the way to everlasting life was not the way to the contrary, they believed with Him that it was narrow and hard to traverse, full of ups and downs, full of pit falls and stumbling blocks, and literally strewn with thorns and briars. It is man's human nature that makes it so; and hence to bring by the most efficacious means, that nature under control was the motive

at the back of the practice of fasting and abstaining during the Lenten-tide. It was, therefore, a time in which the faithful asked God mercy for themselves and showed it to others—a time in which sinners had greater opportunities of being reconciled to God—a time of mourning in which all amusements, festivities and social gatherings were considered to be out of place—a time in which the body was mortified by discipline that the soul might be strengthened and fortified with virtue. That is what Lent was to the Catholics of ages long since gone by, and that is its spirit to-day. This may be a dark and gloomy picture of six weeks of the welcome year—the God-given year, with its warmth and sunshine, with its charms and beauty, with its recurring seasons of activity and repose—but it is no darker than the spirit of Christ's teachings, the universal testimony of the early Catholic writers, and the constant ruling of the Church in every age of her long existence will warrant us in drawing.—Chicago New World.

Skill Required to Cast a Bell.  
Few people know the amount of science and skill required to produce a pure-toned bell. They forget that a bell is a musical instrument, as dependent for its tone quality upon fixed laws as is a piano or organ.