

The Bridge at Athlone.

The Conflict at the Historic Bridge Stands Out in Irish History Side by Side With the Roman Incident Which Has made the Name of Horatius Immortal.

Athlone, the central town in Ireland, stands in the midst of a district especially endowed by nature and rich in historic and patriotic associations in the annals of the Irish struggle. The fight for the Bridge of Athlone in the days of the Williamite war stands out in Irish history side by side with the Roman incident which has made the name of Horatius immortal. Embellished in song and story, the brave stand of the Irish army retreating after the disastrous battle of the Boyne will live forever in Irish annals.

THE BATTLE OF AUGHRIM BROUGHT ABOUT BY ST. RUTH'S FOOLHARDINESS.

The bloody battle of Aughrim, which immediately followed, was the result of foolhardiness at the battle of Athlone on the part of the rash and impetuous but brave French officer, St. Ruth. His flippancy and love of pleasure wrought disaster to the Irish forces on the day of the fight at Athlone and led to his own untimely death a short time later at Aughrim.

In still later times the neighborhood of Athlone has become associated with the immortal Oliver Goldsmith, the scene of whose beautiful poem, the "Deserted Village," is believed to be Lissoy or "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," some eight or ten miles outside of Athlone. In still more modern history Athlone has figured in an unenviable light as the constituency which returned William Keogh of the "Brass band" to Parliament in the early '50s, but the recollection of that fact is easily wiped out by the fact that a few years earlier Athlone had given birth to one of the most brilliant representatives of the Irish race to-day, the versatile, eloquent and fearless journalist and patriot, T. P. O'Connor, M. P.

SITUATED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SHANNON.

Athlone is situated at the southern end of Lough Ree, one of the three great extensions of the river Shannon. It forms a junction of the great Southern and Western and the Midland Great Western railroads and has for centuries been regarded as the gateway between Leinster and Connaught. The city is situated on both sides of the Shannon, one part in the County of Westmeath and the other in Roscommon. A splendid bridge across the river unites the two counties, indeed, the two provinces. In early ages it was known by the name of Ath-Luain, "The Ford of the Moon," and, according to others, Ath-Luan, the "Ford of the Rapids."

INSCRIBED FOREVER IN IRELAND'S ANNALS.

Athlone was closely besieged by the Connaught men for twenty-two weeks during the insurrection of 1641, until the garrison, which had been greatly reduced by famine and disease, was forced to give in. The town was taken by the Parliamentary army under Coote. But it was the great historic fight for the Bridge of Athlone between the Williamites and the Irish armies in 1691 that has inscribed forever the name of Athlone in Ireland's historic annals. After the disastrous battle of the Boyne the Irish army was in full retreat toward Limerick, while the triumphant Williamite army followed in close pursuit.

In May, 1691, a French fleet had arrived in the Shannon with some money, arms and ammunition to aid the Irish, but no troops. St. Ruth, a French officer of unusual bravery and ability, was sent to take the chief command of the Irish army. In St. Ruth's assuming command the gallant Sarsfield, whose bravery at the Boyne and Limerick is historic, was reduced to an inferior command, much to the disgust of the Irish soldiers, although he himself never allowed his feelings to overcome his patriotism. The Williamite army had gathered at Mullingar towards the end of May, 1691. It was commanded by General Ginkles, Ginkles and Mackay, and on June 7, they moved westward toward Athlone, some twenty-eight or thirty miles distant.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIEGE.

Macaulay describes the Williamite army as one with "the ranks one blaze of scarlet, and the artillery such as had never before been seen in Ireland." They were delayed ten days, besieging Ballymore Castle, an Irish outpost defended by Lieutenant-Colonel Ulster Burke and a force of twelve thousand men against Ginkles' thirteen thousand, with the artillery which aroused the enthusiasm of Macaulay. Being joined by the Duke of Wurttemberg, the Prince of Hesse and the Count of Nassau with seven thousand foreign mercenaries, Ginkles appeared before Athlone in June 19, and demanded its surrender. When the town had previously been besieged by Douglas,

the governor, Col. Grace, relinquished the Leinster or British side of the town as untenable, and made his stand successfully from the Connaught or Irish side, as it was known.

Col. Fitzgerald, who was governor when Ginkles made his attack, resolved to defend both the British and Irish sides of the town, acting mainly on the advice of St. Ruth, who promised to reach him speedily with the bulk of the Irish army from Limerick. Fitzgerald had only a garrison of three hundred and fifty men, but knowing how much depended on holding out until St. Ruth arrived, he sallied out with his small force and disputed the approaches to the town with the Williamite army, holding them back for five or six hours.

FITZGERALD'S BRAVE BAND.

But when Ginkles' artillery was brought to play on the town, whose walls on that side were very weak, the whole of the bastion at the Dublin Gate, on the north side near the river was levelled and four thousand men headed by three hundred grenadiers under Mackay burst into the town. In the fearful breach between the Williamites entered two hundred of the brave little band under Fitzgerald perished. The little remnant fell back steadily toward the bridge, fighting every inch of the ground and pressed by more than four thousand foes.

The Williamites raised the shout—"The bridge! the bridge!" knowing that it was the key to the situation, and made a furious rush to get across before the retreating Irish could do so. Had they succeeded of course the town would have been in their hands. But Fitzgerald with his brave handful of one hundred and fifty knew what was at stake in the possession of the bridge, and turning at bay when they reached it they stood like a solid wall against the mass of the enemy.

THE IRISH AXEMEN BROKE DOWN THE BRIDGE IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY.

Above the din of the battle and the shouts of the combatants were heard the sounds of the Irish axemen breaking down the arches of the bridge, while their comrades fought in front of it. Mackay's trained ear needed no explanation of what was happening, and he shouted, "They are destroying the bridge! Save the bridge—the bridge!" and in hundreds his army flung themselves on the few intrepid Irishmen who were still holding the disputed ground. A desperate fight took place, man to man, between the two forces, but the spaces at the bridge being small, one man was enabled to keep five at bay, while a few paces behind, wielding pick and spade, and crowbar, were the engineers of the Irish garrison, attempting to break down the bridge.

After a short interval a rumbling noise and then a crash was heard, while a shout of triumph broke from the Irish side, and a yell of rage from that of their assailants. Two arches of the bridge had fallen into the stream, but it was still possible to cross it. Mackay's voice rose higher as he shouted: "On! on! Now for the bridge!" But still there stood the decimated ranks of its defenders, resolved to die rather than yield. Suddenly a cry, "Back, back, men, for your lives!" was heard from the rear of the Irish fighting force, and as the little band turned in the effort to recross the bridge, the half-broken arches behind them were tottering.

THE DARING UNDERTAKING OF THE BRAVE DEFENDERS.

Most of them rushed across the falling mass, but the last company, which even then had wheeled round to face and hold back the enemy, were too late. They rushed for the passable, but the mass of masonry tumbled over with a roar into the boiling surges of the Shannon, leaving the devoted band on the brink, and in the midst of their foes. There was a moment's pause, and a wail from the Irish, safe on the Connaught side, and as the Williamites rushed on the little force, who seemed already doomed, they drew back a pace or two from the edge of the chasm, flung away their arms, and plunged into the stream.

There was a volley from one thousand guns on the Leinster shore. There was a moment's suspense on each side, and then a cheer rang out of defiance and exultation as the brave fellows reached the Connaught shore and were pulled to land by the welcoming hands of their own comrades. St. Ruth, who was on his way from Limerick, had reached Ballinacloe when he heard that the eastern portion of Athlone had fallen, and set out at once at the head of fifteen hundred horse and foot, leaving the main army to follow. He encamped two miles outside Athlone and appointed Lieutenant-General D'Usson governor instead of the brave Fitzgerald.

THE BRITISH SUCCEEDED IN PARTLY REBUILDING THE BRIDGE.

For seven days the Williamite army with the heavy siege guns and mortars of seven batteries poured hot shot against the Irish section of the town, reducing it to such a mass of ruins that it is said two men could not walk there abreast. On

June 27, one hundred wagons with ammunition for the siege guns reached the Williamite camp from Dublin, and that night the Irish breastworks at the bridge were set on fire and the British force succeeded in flinging some beams over the bridge and partly relaid the bridge with planks. On Sunday, June 28, the Irish were amazed to see that a few more planks would complete the bridge, but their cannon were almost buried in the ruins, while the enemy had battery on battery trained on the narrow spot, until it was certain death to show at all in the line of the nearly finished causeway.

The blood is thrilled even after the lapse of two centuries on reading how a dragoon sergeant named Custume stepped out from the ranks of Maxwell's regiment, and asked, "Are there ten men here who will die with me for Ireland?" Not one but one hundred eager voices shouted "Aye" in response. "Then," said Custume, "we will save Athlone. The bridge must go down."

PERISHED IN THE GLORIOUS ATTEMPT.

Grasping axes and crowbars, the devoted band rushed from behind the breastworks and dashed forward upon the recently laid beams. A fusillade swept the space with grape-shot and bullets. When the smoke cleared away the bodies of the brave Custume and his ten equally heroic companions lay on the ground riddled with bullets. They had torn away some of the beams, but every man of the eleven had perished. Quickly from the ranks of the Irish regiments a shout arose, "There are eleven men more who will die for Ireland," and again the same heroic and the same deadly result, though in a lesser degree. There were two survivors, but the last beam had gone down into the river and Athlone again was saved.

Ginkles, twice foiled in his attempt to cross by the bridge, determined to resort to strategy and started to erect a "close gallery" as well as to attempt to cross by a bridge of boats thrown across the river some distance below the bridge. A third expedient, that of attempting to ford the river above the bridge was likewise resorted to, and this hazardous idea was what really led to the capture of Athlone by the British.

THE FORDING OF THE RIVER.

Three Danish soldiers under sentence of death for some crime were offered their freedom if they would try to ford the river. They consented, being in desperate straits already, put on armor and entered at three different points. The British were ordered to fire, as it were, at the escaping Williamites, but were only to fire over their heads. The Irish concluded that the men were deserters from the Williamite army and did not fire at them, and when the three desperadoes, finding that the river was passable, started to return to their camp the artillery obliged the Irish forces to remain under cover, so that the two escaped.

It was then decided that an assault should be made by the "close gallery," the bridge of boats and the ford next morning. A deserter swam the river during the night and told St. Ruth that an attack was to be made next morning at sunrise. The Williamites were dismayed to find that the Irish army was deployed at the critical point on the Connaught shore to meet them. A desperate fight followed, in the course of which the Irish set fire to a portion of the British breastworks and after several hours' conflict the assault upon Athlone had failed for a third time.

OVERCONFIDENCE OF ST. RUTH.

The Irish were, of course, exultant, and after the last of the Williamites had gone to the rear St. Ruth drew his army to the Irish camp three miles distant. But, vain and over-confident, he invited the officers of his army and the gentry of the neighborhood to a ball that evening in his camp, declaring that the siege was as good as raised. Ginkles, as a matter of fact, had decided to raise the siege, but after a council with his generals the proposition was made to try and rush across the ford that very evening, when it was believed the Irish would be off their guard.

Ginkles, desperate at his failure, and impending disgrace, was ready to try any expedient, and an attempt to cross was again resolved on. The Irish officers on guard noticed St. Ruth that there was some mysterious movement on in the Williamite camp, but St. Ruth curtly dismissed the officer with the remark that he was for the purpose, but it was a secret second message, to which St. Ruth retorted that if the officer was afraid of such attacks he might turn his command over to another.

THE FRENCH GENERAL HEADED NOT THE ADVICE OF SARSFIELD.

Sarsfield, who overheard the remark, implored St. Ruth not to treat so lightly a report by an officer of undoubted bravery. St. Ruth and Sarsfield exchanged angry words, the Frenchman hinting that Sarsfield should know his place, and while the dispute was proceeding an aide-de-camp galloped breathlessly from the town announcing that the British were across the river and in the defenses of Athlone. St. Ruth's self-confidence still stood by him, and he declared: "Then let us drive them back again." He hurried forth for the purpose, but it was too late. The British were even then in the Irish defenses and nothing but a siege could dispossess the new occupants.

Approaching Athlone from the south by steamer on the Shannon, there is no more beautiful trip to be had in Ireland than that from Limerick to the central town in Ireland.

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The Shannon is not navigable between Limerick and Killaloe on account of the rapids and shallows. A canal, however, between the two places permits of navigation. Although the Shannon, from where it rises in Leitrim to its mouth below Limerick is two hundred miles in length, of its total fall of one hundred and forty-seven feet, occur in thirds, or ninety-seven feet, in the seventeen miles between Killaloe and Limerick. The pretty little town of Castleconnell, with its romantic falls and rapids, and Doonas close beside make travelers declare that there is nothing of the kind to equal it in Europe.

THE CASTLE OF THE O'BRIENS.

The old castle of the O'Brien stands near the little village of Castleconnell. There it was that the treacherous Prince Thomond, while visiting his chief, a descendant of Brian Boru, caused the eyes of his unfortunate host to be put out, and later had him murdered. It was one of the earliest places of which the British became possessed, and was granted in 1199 by King John to William de Burgo. Ireton strongly garrisoned the fortress on his march to Limerick, and in 1619 it was held by the troops of James II. who were compelled to surrender to Stewart. The following year, however, it was recaptured by the Irish, who in turn were compelled to surrender it to the Prince of Hesse, until finally Ginkles on his march to Limerick ordered it to be blown up.

Killaloe is situated at the southern end of Lough Derg, an expansion of the Shannon, and there, too, another series of rapids make a fall of twenty-one feet in the river in the course of a mile. Killaloe stands on the Clare shore, and is connected with the Tipperary bank on the opposite side by a bridge of nineteen arches. Its ancient cathedral, whose building is attributed to Donald O'Brien, King of Limerick, in 1160, occupies the site of one founded in the sixth century by St. Lua or Molua, from which it derives its name, Kil-da-Lua, church of St. Lua.

BRIAN BORU'S PALACE.

Kil-da-Lua was repeatedly besieged and restored, being burned successively in 1061, 1080, 1116, 1154, and 1155. A mound or fort called Bal-Borinme, close by, is pointed out as the site of Kincora, the palace of Brian Boru. The place is rendered imperishable by that beautiful poem of Moore's "Remember the Glories of Brian, the Brave."

Remember the glories of Brian the Brave, Though the days of the hero are o'er, Though lost to Mononia and cold in the grave, He returns to Kincora no more!

That star of the field, which so often has poured Its beam on the battle, is set; But enough of its glory remains on each sword To light us to victory yet!

Mononia! when nature embellished the tint Of thy fields and thy mountains so fair, Did she ever intend that a tyrant should print The footsteps of slavery there?

No, Freedom! whose smile we shall never resign, God, tell our invaders, the Danes, That 'tis sweeter to bleed for an age at thy shrine, Than to sleep but a moment in chains!

Nothing now remains of the palace and fortress of Kincora, except a huge mound planted with trees and strongly entrenched. The place was destroyed in the time of Murtagh, grandson of Brian Boru by Donnell MacArghill.

Passing through Lough Derg one of the expansions of the Shannon twenty-three miles long, and in some places thirteen miles wide, in the place the "island" and "burying ground," Holy Island, is seen. St. Camin founded the church there in the sixteenth century.

(Continued on Page 3)

Synopsis of Canadian North-West HOMESTEAD REGULATIONS

ANY even numbered section of Dominion Land in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, excepting 8 and 26, not reserved, may be homesteaded by any person who is the sole head of a family, or any male over 18 years of age, to the extent of one-quarter section of 160 acres, more or less.

Entry must be made personally at the local land office for the district in which the land is situated.

Entry by proxy may, however, be made on certain conditions by the father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister of an intending homesteader.

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(2) If the father (or mother, if the father is deceased) of the homesteader resides upon a farm in the vicinity of the land entered for, the requirements as to residence may be satisfied by such person residing with the father or mother.

(3) If the settler has his permanent residence upon farming land owned by him in the vicinity of his homestead, the requirements as to residence may be satisfied by residence upon said land.

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W. W. COLE.

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A Married St. Laurence, Longworthy.

CHAPTER XXI She wiped her forehead. After all, uncle's would mean continually against her perhaps to make her uncle and aunt that to take up Mrs. Percival's, and uncle's house, would offend in his eyes. She strapped her for the porter, J. disappeared, the room; she was rough serge suit, shoes, and a large add to the elegance. She threw it Katharine observed pale and anxious. "So you are act play the fool, Kit, in earnest in doing ota act!" Biddy Katharine's color restrained the word her lips. "Cervantes made very noble gentleman," she said with things in life for "If the best riches and luxury.

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