

a great measure due. French writers of that period refer to the Irish regiments, as having "fought with an extreme valour" and as having "in the space of half a league" or a mile and a half "despatched more than a thousand of the army with sword thrusts, and clubbed muskets. Lieutenant General Count Arthur Dillon writing of this famous battle relates how "the Irish distinguished themselves by a remarkable strategem. Finding themselves very much incommoded by a redoubt, situated on the right of the enemy, they advanced towards it holding their arms with the butt ends upwards. It being supposed that they were coming forward to desert, they were allowed to approach. They then jumped into the redoubt, of which they made themselves masters, and turned its cannon against the enemies." Marshal Catinat who had granted permission for this manoeuvre, availed himself of the enemy's surprise, and put them to rout. This famous general gave a most flattering account of the conduct of the Irish in this battle, and of the share which they had in winning the victory.

One of the most famous exploits performed by a body of men of any nationality was that of the rescue of Cremona in 1702. General Villeroy had succeeded Marshal Catinat in the command of the French army in 1701, and having rashly attacked Prince Eugene Duke of Savoy, was defeated and had to retire for winter quarters into Cremona. After this move on the part of the French, Eugene immediately set about drawing up plans of attack. Having entered into an intrigue with a certain Cassoli of Cremona to betray the city, the latter, by means of an aqueduct allowed some of Eugene's grenadiers to penetrate into the town disguised. Eugene's design was to surprise the town at night. Accordingly on on the 31st. of January he moved forward and on the following day the Allies closed in on the town. By different means entries were effected and soon whole regiments of Eugene's army were inside the walls. Troops of Cavalry headed by Count Merci dashed through the streets. And thus, before the French were aware of the attack the town was almost lost. The French General Marshal Villeroy,

riding out unattended to enquire into the tumult was made captive by a band of Eugene's cavalry headed by an Irishman named O'Donnell. There is an interesting story connected with this episode. Villeroy seeing himself in the hands of an Irish exile, hoped to escape by bribery. He made all kinds of promises, a thousand pistoles and a regiment of horse, were quickly offered to this noble "Soldier of Fortune." But all were as quickly refused, and Villeroy was taken out of the town a prisoner of war. The French army upon hearing of the capture of their general became demoralized. But little reason had they to despair, for they remained one stronghold called the Po gate which was still held by a band of 35 Irishmen. The gallant fellows upon being commanded by Count Merci to surrender answered with a volley. And this small band of heroes, by staving off defeat until two Irish regiments encamped near by were awakened, turned the tide of victory. Headed by Dillon and Burke they turned out in their shirts to defend themselves against the attack of the Imperialists. An eminent writer describing the battle speaks thus "It was now ten o'clock in the day, and Mahony had received orders to fight his way from the Po to the Mantua Gate. He pushed on, driving the enemy's infantry before him, but suffering much from their fire, when suddenly Baron Freiberg at the head of a regiment of Imperial Cuirassiers burst into Dillon's regiment. For a while their case seemed desperate; but almost naked as they were, they grappled with their foes. The linen shirt and steel cuirass—the naked footman, and the harnessed cavalier met, and the conflict was desperate and doubtful. Just at this moment Mahony grasped the bridle of Freiberg's horse and hid him ask for quarter. "No quarter to-day said Freiberg, dashing his spurs into his horse. He was instantly shot. The Irish then redoubled their efforts. Few of the Cuirassiers lived to fly. But all who survived did fly, and there stood those glorious fellows in the wintry streets, bloody, triumphant, half naked." But they had rescued Cremona, and all Europe rang with applause for this daring and brilliant exploit. King Louis sent