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## **An historical record of the Royal Regiment of horse guards**

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### Chapter IV.

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## CHAPTER IV.

King William and Queen Mary proclaimed—The Blues embark for Flanders—Are recalled and sent to Ireland—Battle of the Boyne—James retires to France—William advances with his Army to Limerick—Operations before that City—The Siege is raised—General de Ginckell takes the command of the Army—Campaign of 1691—Skirmish at the Mote of Grenogue—Athlone taken—Battle of Aghrim—Capitulation of Limerick, and termination of the War—The Blues return to England—Transactions during the Reign of William III.

1689 ON the 18th of February, 1689, King William and Queen Mary were, with much solemnity, proclaimed at Northampton, by the High Sheriff of the county, William Hastings, Esq., accompanied by several troops of the Earl of Oxford's Regiment of Horse, and a great number of the gentry and freeholders, together with the Mayor and Aldermen in their formalities. In the evening there were bonfires, and other expressions of general joy\*. But the throne of King William III. was as yet scarcely secure, and the Regiment was soon called upon more active service. The new Monarch distrusted his English forces: he could not help remarking that, though a majority of the officers had unhesitatingly declared themselves in his favour, yet the great mass of the common soldiers

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\* London Gazette, February 23, 1689.

had shewn much reluctance to abandon the service 1689 of King James. It was this circumstance that prompted the gallant Viscount of Dundee to counsel his master to remain in the kingdom. ‘Your army,’ said he, ‘though disbanded, is not dispersed. Give me your commission to raise ten thousand men—I will bear your standard through England, and drive before it the Dutch and their Prince\*.’ King William, from a similar conviction, was prompted to depend rather upon his Dutch than his English Guards, and quartered the latter in towns at a distance from the capital. His distrust was strengthened by the actual mutiny of one regiment (the Royals) about this time; and now, relying entirely upon his foreign troops for security in his newly-acquired kingdom, he determined to employ the greater number of the British regiments on the Continent or in Ireland. The Royal Regiment of Horse Guards was accordingly shipped for Flanders, upon the declaration of war against France, in the beginning of May, 1689, and continued there during the remainder of the year; but it does not seem to have been engaged in any operations of importance.

In the mean time, the whole of Ireland, with the exception of Londonderry (which had been gallantly defended till relieved), and the country adjacent to it, acknowledged the authority of King James, who, accompanied by the Duke of Berwick, and some other officers who remained faithful to

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\* Macpherson.

1689 him, also by a considerable number of French troops which the King of France had sent to his aid, had proceeded thither, and was now at the head of a numerous and well-appointed army. It was evident that this position of affairs, whilst it gave increasing strength and courage to the disaffected subjects of King William at home, utterly paralyzed his efforts in prosecuting the war on the Continent. Withdrawing, therefore, some regiments from Flanders, and some from Scotland (which he was the better able to do, this latter country being now entirely reduced), he placed himself at the head of nearly the whole disposable force of the empire, and proceeded to Ireland, in order to terminate the war. The Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, on its return from Flanders, disembarked at Portsmouth, on the 22d of April, 1690, and on the 15th of May following set out on its march for Highlake\*, in Cheshire, from whence it embarked for Ireland, on the 19th and 20th of June †, and shortly afterwards joined the army which was assembled at Loughbrickland, in the county of Down ‡. King William, who, accom-

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\* Marching Orders, War Office.

† London Gazette, June 23, 1690.

‡ A Regiment of Horse Guards, under the command of the Earl of Portland, had accompanied King William from Holland; and embarked from Highlake, for Ireland, at the same time with Lord Oxford's Regiment. The two regiments arrived in the camp at Loughbrickland, within a few days of each other, when, by way of distinction from its Dutch rival, whose uniform was also blue, the name "Oxford Blues," was given to the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, and the Regiment has as yet hardly lost the appellation

panied by Prince George, the Duke of Ormond, 1690 the Earl of Oxford, and his chief officers, had landed a few days before, was now at the head of an army amounting to about thirty-six thousand men, with which he immediately advanced against James, who, upon the approach of his opponent, withdrew his forces from their encampment near Dundalk, and retired across the Boyne, with the apparent intention of disputing the passage of that river. On the 30th of June, the English army, marching in three lines, passed Ardee, where the enemy had left a garrison; and in the afternoon the advanced guard of horse, under Sir John Lanier, halted on the bank of the river Boyne. The King, placing himself in front of them, proceeded to reconnoitre the position of James's army, which was strongly posted on the opposite side, extending in two lines along the river to the westward of the town of Drogheda. As the King approached the ford at the pass of the Old Bridge, where he intended to force the passage, the enemy opened their fire from a battery of six-pounders, and killed some few troopers and horses, upon which the horse were ordered to fall a little backward, to have the advantage of a rising ground, which protected them from the cannon\*. At this instant, a spent cannon-ball grazed the King's right shoulder, which it considerably bruised, and, at

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thus given to it. The Earl of Portland's Horse Guards shortly afterwards returned to Holland.

\* An Impartial History of the most material Occurrences in the Kingdom of Ireland, by George Story. London, 1691, p. 76.

1690 the same time, tore his coat; the rumour was immediately spread that he was killed, but was soon dissipated, by the appearance of William, who rode publicly through the ranks of his army to assure them of his safety. At a Council of War, held that night, it was resolved that the army should attempt the passage of the river in the following order. The right wing of the foot under Lieutenant-General Douglas, and the right wing of the horse under Count Schomberg, were to march to the right, and passing the river at or near Slane Bridge, to fall upon the left flank of James's army. The left wing of the horse were to cross and place themselves between the enemy's camp and Drogheda, whilst the main body of foot, consisting principally of the Dutch and French Protestant regiments, forced their way by the ford, at the pass of the Old Bridge. Accordingly, at break of day, on the 1st of July, the whole army was in motion, every man having a green bough or sprig fastened in his hat\* to distinguish him from the enemy, who wore bits of white paper. The right wing, having discovered a practicable ford below Slane Bridge, passed the river at that point. James, however, perceiving this movement, had strengthened his left flank, and his army was drawn up in two lines to receive them; added to which, the ground being much broken, and intersected with ditches, they were able to advance but slowly†. But King William having now ordered his foot to pass at the Old

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\* Story, p. 78.

† Story, p. 84.

Bridge, which they did very gallantly, the Dutch 1690 guards leading the way through the water, though opposed to a sharp fire of musketry; and the left wing at the same time passing the river between the enemy's camp and Drogheda, the Irish army at once gave way, and fled in confusion. William, however, satisfied with his victory, declined pursuing them, though strongly pressed to do so by some of his Generals\*.

On the Irish side, the loss is said to have amounted to near one thousand five hundred men, whilst that of the English was about four hundred. The chief persons of note who were killed on the English side were the Duke of Schomberg, Colonel Caillemote, (a French Protestant), and Walker, the clergyman, who had so gallantly defended Londonderry in the preceding year.

There is no account of this famous passage of the Boyne from which we can ascertain with accuracy how and where the several British regiments engaged were posted. The truth seems to be, that few of them were much exposed †: King William had as yet hardly acquired sufficient confidence in his English forces to trust to

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\* We learn from Story, that Lord Oxford and my Lord Portland were for sending three thousand horsemen, *with each a musketeer behind him, to fall upon them in the rear as they retreated*, 'which,' says he, 'might have done great matters, for the enemy were in such consternation that they marched all night.'—p. 86.

† As to our English forces, there were few of them that had an opportunity at this place to show themselves, but those who had acquitted themselves very well.—*Story*, p. 89.

1690 their efforts for the overthrow of their late Sovereign. Probably, also, it was on this account that he rejected the counsel of those who advised a vigorous pursuit. Drogheda surrendered on the following day, and the victorious army moved forward towards Dublin, from which city King James retired in despair to Waterford, and from thence re-embarked for France. In the mean time, King William, having sent forward a detachment to take possession of Dublin, encamped his army at Finglass, about five miles from that city. Here, on the 7th and 8th of July, he reviewed his troops\*; and on the 9th, having dispatched a strong body of men, under Lieutenant-General Douglas, to reduce Athlone, he himself marched westward, with the main body, towards Limerick, about which city the Irish were now concentrating their forces. Sending off detachments from his line of march, he reduced in succession, Kilkenny, Clonmel, and Waterford, but on the 27th of July, having received accounts of the unsettled state of affairs in England, he suddenly left his camp at Carrick, and proceeded to Dublin on his return to that country. Having received more favourable intelligence, he rejoined the army on the 2d of August, which now moved forward to Carri Gallis, within five miles of Limerick, in the front of which city the Irish forces had intrenched themselves in their camp,

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\* At this review there were present of the Lord Oxford's Regiment 368 men.—*Story*, p. 99.

and by cutting down timber, &c. had materially 1690 added to the difficulties of the approach, which did not exceed one hundred and fifty yards in breadth, being bounded on each side by impassable bogs, and closely intersected by hedges\*. Early on the following morning, a strong force was sent against them, detached out of the regiments of Oxford, Trelawney, Cutts, Lanier, Lloyd, and some Danes under the command of the Earl of Portland and Brigadier Stuart, amounting in all to about one thousand one hundred men, who advanced within cannon-shot of the town, driving from their intrenchments three regiments of the enemy's foot, one of horse, and one of dragoons, who stood but one fire before they retreated, though protected by several thick hedges from behind which they were enabled to fire upon their assailants. On the return of this party, the King, attended by Prince George, the Herr Overkirk, Major-General de Ginckell, and some other officers; and taking with him a guard of about two hundred horse, proceeded to reconnoitre. Upon approaching the enemy's encampment, a party of their horse advanced to meet them. But Captain Selby, of the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, whose troop formed the advanced guard, having drawn forward his men in order to charge them, they quickly retired.

On the following day (the 9th of June), the division under Lieutenant-General Douglas having

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\* Journal of the Siege of Limerick.—*Story*, p. 112.

1690 returned from its unsuccessful expedition against Athlone, the whole army, thus reinforced, moved forward towards the city, under the guns of which the Irish were speedily compelled to retire, and in the evening the place was formally summoned. Limerick was at this time defended by M. Boisseleau, a French officer of reputation, under whom the Duke of Berwick and Colonel Sarsfield acted as Lieutenants. The siege proceeded but slowly; for the King's army was badly supplied with artillery, and a field-train of six twenty-four and two eighteen-pounders, and a great quantity of ammunition had fallen into the hands of the Irish, under Colonel Sarsfield, who had suddenly passed the Shannon to intercept them; and William, being only able to invest the place on the south side of the river, it was in no danger of being distressed for provisions.

On the 20th of August, a fort which commanded the approach having been taken, the Irish made a sortie from St. John's gate, and advanced very nearly to the fort, which had that morning been taken from them. But the English, under the eye of their Sovereign, speedily repelled this attack. Major Wood, of Colonel Byerley's Regiment, commanding an advanced party of twenty-five French and twenty-seven English horse, leaping a ditch, engaged a squadron of Irish horse, and broke them; and was well supported by Lieutenant-Colonel Windham and Captain Lucy of the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, with some Dutch and Danish

horse, who charged the enemy and beat them 1690 back almost to the very gate\* ; but on retiring, being much exposed to the enemy's fire from the walls, they lost several men, and, amongst the rest, Captain Lucy of the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, a gentleman much lamented by all who knew him. On the 27th, a breach having been made, King William attempted to carry the place by assault ; but the defence was desperate, and the British troops were compelled to retire. Chagrined at this failure, William raised the siege in disgust (August 30), and shortly afterwards returned to England. The regiments of English horse, under Sir John Lanier, now retired to quarters appointed for them in the King's and the Queen's counties†, where they seem to have been engaged in continual skirmishes with the Irish Rapparees (as the independent armed peasantry were called) throughout the ensuing autumn and winter. In the mean time Lord Churchill (now created Earl of Marlborough) had landed with an army of five thousand men, and having reduced Cork and Kinsale, returned to England. The command of the army then devolved upon General de Ginckell, who, in the beginning of the year 1691, having heard that a considerable number of 1691 the enemy's troops had assembled at Ballymore, with the intention of fortifying that town, which covered the approach to Athlone, had drawn together a body of the King's troops, and on

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\* Story, p. 124.—Journal of the Siege of Limerick. † Story.

1691 the 26th of February he, with Sir John Lanier, advanced from Streamstown with some foot, horse, and dragoons. As soon as they began their march, the enemy's sentinels on the hills gave notice of their approach, and, by the time the English troops had arrived at a pass four miles from Streamstown, they saw the enemy on the other side regularly drawn up, and (as the prisoners afterwards reported) in number about two thousand three hundred, commanded by Clifford\*. The pass was secured by a palisadoed work. As soon as the English foot advanced, the Irish ran from the other end of the pass, and were followed by the English horse and dragoons towards the mote of Grenogue, which, some hours before, had been the head-quarters of the enemy's horse, and to a hill on that side, where the main body was drawn up in good order, but, on the approach of the English, retired into the town, at the entrance of which they had thrown up a trench, which was very defensible, but they not thinking it so, quitted the place. The advanced party, which consisted of ten of the Lord Oxford's Horse, twelve of Sir John Lanier's†, and Cornet Lisle, seconded by some of Levison's Dragoons‡, Major-General Kirke's grenadiers on horseback, and a detachment of St.

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\* This seems to have been the same officer by whose exertions, when Major of the Royal Dragoons, that regiment was recovered for the service of King James, in 1688, at Salisbury.

† The present First Dragoon Guards.

‡ The present Third Light Dragoons.

John's Regiment, commanded by Captain Kirke, 1691 overtook the enemy's foot before they were got out of the town, dispersing them into the woods and bogs, and killing a great many of them. The before-mentioned advanced party of twenty-two men, with Lord Lisburn at their head as a volunteer, pursued the enemy's horse, who fled on the causeway towards Athlone so fast, that General de Ginckell, Sir John Lanier, and Colonel Wolsley, with the remainder of the horse, could not keep pace with them, though they galloped hard, and many of the Irish were obliged to quit both horses and boots to save themselves in the woods and bogs thereabouts. Thus it continued for about six miles, till they came within half a mile of Athlone, when it was not thought safe to follow them any further with so small a number of horse and dragoons, so they came back to the foot, which staid behind.

In this action one trooper of the Lord Oxford's Regiment was killed, and four others slightly wounded. The Irish, according to the most modest computation (says the Gazette from which this account is taken), lost above two hundred\*. After this, the bad weather not permitting the English forces to keep the field, they retired to their previous quarters, and General de Ginckell returned to Dublin.

During the winter the French King had sent a large supply of provisions, clothes, and ammu-

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\* London Gazette, March 9, 1690.

1691 nition for the use of the Irish at Limerick, under the conduct of General St. Ruth, an officer enjoying high military reputation, who was accompanied by a great number of French officers bearing commissions from King James, and under their direction the Irish army had been re-organized and recruited.

At length, after concerting his plan of operations, and having received instructions from the King to put an end to the war at all hazards, General de Ginckell took the field at the end of May, 1691\*. Having assembled his army near Mullingar, he advanced towards Ballymore, which place surrendered at discretion on the 8th of June. On the 16th he commenced the siege of Athlone, and on the 30th that place was carried by storm; the assailants charging through the rapid stream of the Shannon breast high, though their passage was impeded by the ruins of the breach which their own batteries had made, forced their way through water, fire and smoke, and in less than half an hour became masters of the town†.

St. Ruth, whose army lay at a short distance off, received the tidings of the fall of Athlone with surprise and chagrin; but he was too prudent to commit his army, so recently organized, in an attempt to recover the place, whose fortifications were now turned against him, and he retired to a strong position near Aghrim, in the county of Gal-

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\* Life of King William III. London, 1702.

† London Gazette.—Life of King William III.

way, where he encamped his army, and awaited 1691 the approach of the English. In the mean time a large supply of provisions having been conveyed from Dublin by the Earl of Portland's Regiment, arrived in the English camp\*; and De Ginckell prepared to follow up his success. His army passed the Shannon on the 10th of July; the horse and artillery over a stone bridge, and the foot over a bridge of boats below the town, halting that night about five miles from Athlone. On the 11th he again marched forward, and encamped on the left of Ballinasloe, along the Roscommon side of the river Suck, within three miles of the Irish army under General St. Ruth, who were very advantageously encamped at Aghrim; their left stretching towards Kilconnel Abbey, and their right on the hill of Kilcommodon†. A rivulet ran on their left, with steep hills and little bogs on each side; near to which was a large bog, almost a mile across; at the end of which stood the castle of Aghrim, commanding the way that led to their camp, passable for horse nowhere but just at the castle.

This bog extended itself along the front to the right, where there was another pass, called Urachree, having a rising ground on each side of it; and the Irish camp lay along the ridge of

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\* Life of King William III.

† This account of the battle of Aghrim is chiefly taken from an account of that battle published by authority, 1691; the London Gazette; the Life of King William III., 1702; and the continuation of Story's History of the Wars in Ireland, London, 1693.

1691 a hill, on one side of which stood two old Danish forts about half a mile distant from the bog below, and the space between was cut into many small inclosures, from behind which (there being a communication between them) the Irish musketeers were enabled to fire with great advantage. On the morning of the 12th, by eleven o'clock, the whole of the English army had passed the Suck; the horse by two fords, and the foot and artillery over a bridge, in as good order as the ground would permit; and the General, having reconnoitred the enemy's position, determined, if possible, to force them from the pass of Urachree. For this service he detached the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, a squadron of Cunningham's dragoons, and the regiment of the Earl of Portland. The Irish seeing them advance, and that but a small part of the army was yet come up, sent some foot and horse through the bog; upon which the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards dismounted and repulsed them.

The enemy now detached several battalions and squadrons to support their men; but, the English being also reinforced, they were compelled to retire to their main body. The cannon, in the mean time, had dislodged the advanced guard of the Irish at the end of the defile that leads to Aghrim, and the right wing of the British horse and foot were posted there. It was now two o'clock, and as the enemy were retiring, De Ginckell, unwilling to risk his men in the attempt to force so strong a position, determined

to postpone a general action till the next day. 1691  
But seeing the Irish in some disorder, and, as it is said by the advice of General Mackay, he changed his resolution, and ordered that an attack should be forthwith made upon their right, in the hope to draw their strength from the Castle of Aghrim, so that the right wing of the English should have an easier passage to attack their left, and thus the whole English army might have an opportunity to engage, which otherwise could not be. Accordingly, about half-past four o'clock on that evening, the English left wing advanced to the attack, and the battle began afresh by five. For an hour and a half the attack was continued against the pass of Urachree, which was well defended by the Irish, aided by the strength of their intrenchments, and the natural difficulties of the ground; when the English Commander, observing several bodies of the horse and foot of his opponents draw off to the left and more to the right, where they were hardly pressed by the English, ordered his foot to pass the bog, and, supported by his cannon, to attack the centre. They were at first driven back into the bog, but being reinforced, recovered their ground, and succeeded in maintaining themselves till the horse were able to come to their support. In the mean time part of the French horse of the Marquis de Rovigny\*,

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\* This was a regiment of French Protestants in the service of King William: at the conclusion of the Irish war their Commander, the Marquis, was created Earl of Galway, and afterwards became distinguished in the war in Spain.

1691 and the English of Sir John Lanier, had been withdrawn from the right, where they were at first posted, in order to reinforce the left, where they did very good service, and the remainder of the horse on the right now advanced with great gallantry along the pass that led by the Castle of Aghrim, which, as well as the hedges and walls about it, was strongly lined with musketeers. They were supported by Major-General Kirke's and Colonel Gustavus Hamilton's foot, who, after receiving the enemy's fire for some time, at length succeeded in lodging themselves in a dry ditch beyond the bog. It is said that St. Ruth, seeing the English horse draw that way, and then begin to scramble over at a place where only two abreast could pass, and that too with great difficulty, after which they were obliged to pass within thirty yards of the castle, could not restrain his astonishment at seeing them attempt this, and inquired what they meant by it: when being told that they would certainly endeavour to pass there, and attack him on the right, he exclaimed with an oath—'they are brave fellows! it is a pity they should be so exposed.'

At length the horse, though with much difficulty, forced the pass. Sir Francis Compton, with Lord Oxford's Regiment, being one of the first that could be in a posture to engage, fell in at random amongst the enemy, and charged them briskly; and though his men were once or twice repulsed, yet being seconded by the Marquis de Rovigny's French horse, with the Marquis at

their head, Colonel Langston's, and some of 1691 Colonel Byerley's horse, as also Brigadier Levison's dragoons, they charged along the edge of the bog, and routed the enemy from their intrenchments. The Irish were now every where giving way, and St. Ruth having put himself at the head of his reserve, in order, if possible, to retrieve the fortune of the day, was descending Kilcommodon Hill, when he was killed by a cannon shot. The death of the Commander at once terminated the struggle. His French guards immediately retreated with his body, and the remainder of his army, throwing down their arms, fled in all directions\*. A misty rain, and the darkness of the night (for it was past eight o'clock when the enemy were routed), put an end to the pursuit, which was continued for about four miles. The loss on the side of the Irish amounted to five thousand men, and the whole of their baggage, tents, and cannon, which latter, consisting of only nine pieces, fell into the hands of the victors, whose loss is said not to have much exceeded six hundred men. Such was the unmi-

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\* In some of the accounts of this battle, St. Ruth, upon advancing with his reserve, is said to have exclaimed, 'Now will I drive these English to the gates of Dublin;' and it is asserted that had not their General been slain, the Irish must have been victorious. We are, however, assured by the Duke of Berwick, in his Memoirs, apparently in answer to the foregoing report, that the battle was irretrievably lost before the fall of the General. Indeed the expressions attributed to St. Ruth prove nothing—they are merely such as might be used, even in desperate circumstances, by a Commander anxious to encourage his men in a final struggle.

1691 tigated ferocity of the war, that little quarter appears to have been given on either side. The loss of the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards was as follows:—one Captain, two Lieutenants, one Cornet, forty-five troopers, and twenty-four horses, killed; and twenty-one troopers wounded\*. The names of the officers who fell are unknown; but General De Ginckell for many years afterwards bore testimony to the gallant bearing of the Regiment in this action. That Commander, when complimented upon the skill and courage he had shown at the battle of Aghrim, modestly declared, ‘that the honour of that great day was principally owing to the conduct and bravery of the Marquis de Rovigny, and of the Oxford and French regiments of Horse†.’

The remains of the Irish army fled in confusion to Limerick, where it was resolved to make a final stand, in the hope of obtaining succours from France. Towards that city, therefore, after reducing Galway (which at once capitulated, the garrison being permitted to retire to Limerick), De Ginckell marched with his victorious army. Having secured Portumna, Bonnachar, and other passes of the Shannon, he formally invested the place. But the details of this second siege of Limerick, which was terminated (Sept. 25th) by the celebrated treaty, granting indemnity to the Roman Catholics, are involved in much obscurity;

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\* This list of the killed and wounded is taken from Story's ‘Continuation of the Impartial History.’

† Life of King William III. p. 310.

and there is no authentic account of any further 1691 operation in which the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards was engaged during the remainder of its stay in Ireland. It did not, however, return to England till the following year; when upon disembarking at Highlake (March the 18th), the Regiment marched to London, where it continued stationed throughout the year\*.

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\* Marching Orders, War Office.