5-2003

What if the Irish had Won the Battle of the Boyne?

Erin O'Brien

What if the Irish had Won the Battle of the Boyne?

By Erin O'Brien

History 492
Dr. Fanning
Spring 2003

The Battle of the Boyne, on 1 July 1690, was the last great battle in Irish history. The defeat of the Irish Catholic forces under King James II by the English Protestants under King William III changed the course of Irish history forever. England now had Ireland in hand and would squeeze her unbearably in the years to come. The Catholic majority would lose their land, the main source of political power and wealth, and even the freedom to practice their religion in peace. The final cause of all these changes was the implementation of the Penal Codes, which paved the way for the Protestant ascendancy. But what would have happened if the Irish had been victorious? Would England have allowed Ireland to rule autonomously? Or would the two countries have been yoked together again under the authority of James II? While the answers to these questions would be pure speculation, it is possible to extrapolate certain patterns of cause and effect, and piece together an alternate history. But first it is important to understand the situation in Ireland before, during, and immediately after the War of the Two Kings.

'Property and religion lie at the root of the three great upheavals, the Ulster plantation, the Cromwellian confiscation, and the Williamite settlement, which fashioned the pattern of eighteenth-century Ireland'.[1] Every generation of Irishmen struggled to master these issues, with varying amounts of success. But why were land ownership and religious freedom such triggers for conflict in Ireland? Because Ireland was unique from the rest of Europe: since 1169 it had been ruled by foreign conquerors and the Protestant Reformation had little effect on the religious beliefs of the common people. These two unusual traits caused problems because ever since the early part of the millenium, land

[1] John Brady and Patrick Corish, The Church Under the Penal Code vol. 4 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), 1.

has been equivalent to power, and the Catholics of Ireland were at loggerheads with the new Protestants of England who wished to rule them.

The first organized attempt at English rule in Ireland during the 17th century came in the form of the Ulster Plantation. The Plantation had its roots in the Flight of the Earls in 1607. When O'Neill and approximately ninety of his followers left Ulster, their land, and the land of other Irishmen of suspicious loyalty, was confiscated and turned over to the Crown. In all, 500,000 acres were available for the Crown to award to its loyal subjects, who would further England's interests in Ireland. 'Assimilation with the Irish was not the aim of the plantations: distinctiveness and control were'.[2] But control was never achieved and there was a rebellion of the displaced Irishmen in 1641.

The very next year England was torn apart by a civil war that would last until 1649. During that time chaos reigned in Ireland. As the old saying went, "England's misfortune is Ireland's opportunity". While the Puritans and Royalists were busy fighting amongst themselves, the Irish used their opportunity to drive the Planters off the land and to kill about 10,000 of them. But the Puritans were soon in control of England and focused their attention on Ireland. Cromwell himself ended the rebellion in Ireland by taking Drogheda and burning it to the ground. After that event followed the second great upheaval that would shape the 18th century, the Cromwellian land confiscation. 'The Cromwellian settlement was not so much a plantation as a transference of the sources of wealth and power from Catholics to Protestants'.[3] In addition to land redistribution, there

---

[2] Mike Cronin, A History of Ireland (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 65.
[3] T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, eds. The Course of Irish History 4th edition (Landam, Maryland: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 2000), 162.

was religious persecution that involved harsh penalties for Catholic priests and their followers. The most notorious of these polices was the £5 bounty for the head of a priest.[4]

Luckily for the Irish, Cromwell soon died and the Protectorate began to lose authority. Charles II was invited back to England in 1660 to restore the monarchy that his father had died for. One of Charles's first acts as king was the Act of Settlement in 1662; designed to mitigate the problems caused by the Cromwellian confiscations. This confusing act gave some land back to its rightful Irish owners, but only if they met specific qualifications. The Planters who wished to remain in Ulster were given back their lands, and the rest was given to soldiers who had fought for the monarchy during the civil war. Men who were dispossessed just because they were Catholic were given land, equivalent to what they had lost, in Connaught and Clare. 'When stock was taken of the Restoration settlement, Catholic landowners were better off than they had been under Cromwell, but they had recovered only a fraction of their original estates'.[5] In 1641, before the plantation of Ulster, Catholics had controlled approximately 59 percent of the land. Prior to the War of the Two Kings, that percentage was down to 22, and by 1703, during the Penal era, Catholics controlled only 14 percent of the land in their own country.[6] The land restoration placated the Irish for the time being, but the English were offended by it.

Even more upsetting was the religious toleration that Charles II restored to his Irish Catholic subjects. Penal laws from the reign of Elizabeth I were in place to restrict Catholics in England but as yet they were not enforced in Ireland. This earlier penal code,

---

[4] Cronin, 75.
[5] Moody and Martin, 165.
[6] John G. Simms, The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland, 1690-1703 (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1956), 195.

known as the Elizabethan Church Settlement, was similar in form to the Penal Codes of the 1700's. It included an Oath of Supremacy to the Head of the Church of England rather than the Pope and fines for not attending Protestant services.[7] Luckily, there was a more recent custom established in Ireland, in the form of the Graces granted by Charles I. During his reign Charles had been constantly at war with Catholic Spain and worried that Catholic Ireland would support her rather than Protestant England. Irish lords offered Charles a large sum of money to prove their loyalty, but demanded certain favors in return. Known collectively as the Graces, these favors included protection of their claims on the land, a cessation of the recusancy fine, and a relaxation of the Oath of Supremacy.[8]

In spite of all these concessions, the Catholics were not satisfied with their current situation. The land settlement soon proved to be unsatisfactory. Priests sermonized against it and poets lamented the hardship it placed on the Irish.[9] Another hardship was the Test Act of 1673. It required that all officials, both civil and military, swear an oath placing the authority of the King above that of the Pope and declaring against Transubstantiation. Of course Catholics would never swear such an oath and were therefore excluded from all political arenas. Not that the people of Ireland had much political strength to begin with. Poyning's law, passed in 1495, required that all acts of the Irish Parliament be approved by the English Parliament. Despite all the restrictions against them, there was a small group of Irish landowners and lawyers who were waiting for an opportunity to retake their government.

---

[7] Margaret MacCurtain, Tudor and Stuart Ireland (Dublin: Gill and MacMillian Ltd., 1972), 188.
[8] Cronin, 70.
[9] Moody and Martin, 166.

In the meantime, the Protestants had the upper hand. With every successive land confiscation they gained more property and influence in Ireland. Because of the Test Act, they also dominated all civil and military posts, including Parliament, judicial assignments and all the administrative positions appointed by the English over Ireland. They could practice their faith with no restrictions or recriminations. They collected the tithe to support their ministers and had use of the beautiful Gothic cathedrals that were taken from the Catholics. It is easy to see why they would fear James II, King Charles's Catholic brother, gaining the throne.

Though he was a Catholic, James still had the attributes of a good king. As a child, while in exile after the murder of his father Charles I, it was recommended that James try to escape his captivity and various people aided him in this. Unfortunately, he was caught. His jailers threatened that he could be executed for treason, but because he was still a child they would settle for a promise of good behavior. 'James instantly responded; he gave his word; and, like every other promise of his life, it was kept'.[10] In addition to honesty, James also displayed fierce loyalty to his family and country. In April 1652 he joined the French Army as a way to support himself and his family, but he never forgot that he was an Englishman. His journal, kept during his years of training, reveals nothing so much as his Englishness. While he admired individuals from foreign countries, he believed that other nations as a whole were inferior when compared to England.[11] At a young age he also showed signs of a 'very stubborn will of his own, an obstinate determination to abide by what he considered his duty'.[12] All of these things

[10] Jane Lane, King James the Last (London: Andrew Dakers Ltd., 1942), 55.
[11] Lane, 67.
[12] Lane, 70.

combined to make him very popular with the English commoners during the reign of his brother. But once he gained the throne, the Protestant upper class worked doubly hard to force him off again.

The ascension of James II to the throne of England on 6 February 1685 was viewed as deliverance for the Catholics of Ireland. In him they saw 'the best chance they could ever have of getting back their lands and seeing their Church restored to its old position'.[13] They believed he would fight to turn the Church of England back to Catholicism. But James was firstly the King of England and he knew the English would never allow him to restore the lands or religion of the Catholics. He did make one concession to the Irish. He appointed the Catholic Richard Talbot as Viceroy of Ireland. For his part, Talbot reorganized the Irish army to include Gaelic regiments and Old English leadership. However, nothing James did was enough to please his subjects. 'Catholics thought he did not go far enough; Protestants thought he went too far'.[14] The last straw for the Protestants came in 1688 with the birth of James's son. It appeared there would be a Catholic dynasty in England and the Protestants were forced to take drastic actions to prevent that. They invited James's Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange to drive James out and rule jointly in his place. They arrived late in 1688 and James fled to France.

But what of the man the lords of England wished to replace their king with? Prince William of Orange was both nephew and son-in-law to James. James's sister Mary was the wife of William II, Prince of Orange. Their son, William III, then married James's eldest daughter, Mary. As a child he was very restricted in both his activities and

---

[13] John G. Simms, War and Politics in Ireland, 1649-1730 (London: The Hambledon Press, 1986), 135.
[14] Simms, War and Politics, 136.

studies. He was a sickly child and as a result his diet was regulated, he was allowed little exercise and always went to bed early. His life was equally controlled in the classroom. 'There was a firm foundation of [Protestant] religion' pared with instruction on how to be 'polite and affable and to hide his real feelings' and there was also a 'firm grounding in military theory'.[15] All these things would serve him well later in life. He made a name for himself as an able ruler in Orange and that, combined with his close connections to the Stuart family, made him very attractive to the men whom plotted to oust King James. In James's absence and seeming abdication, William and Mary were crowned on April 11, 1689. That very year, William approved a Toleration Act, but it only applied to Protestant nonconformists, not Catholics. This was an especially hard blow for the Catholics, who expected to be restored to power under James.

But James had not abandoned his people entirely. He was already making plans to use Ireland as a springboard back onto the English throne. Even as he sought refuge in France, Richard Talbot, Lord of Tyrconnel and James's Lord Deputy in Ireland, was rallying troops to support his sovereign's next move. Though Tyrconnel had previously 'promised upon his word and honour not to raise or arm additional troops', that is just what he did. [16] This move earned him the animosity of the Protestants and the sobriquet 'lying Dick Talbot'.[17] A combination of Tyrconnel's treachery and anonymous letters warning Protestants of an advancing force of hostile Irish Catholics made tensions very high in Ulster. Shortly thereafter, Lord Antrim started to move his regiment from northwestern Ulster toward Dublin. When they reached Londonderry in December of

---

[15] John Miller, The Life and Times of William and Mary (London: Book Club Associates, 1974), 23.
[16] Richard Bagwell, Ireland Under the Stuarts 1909 vol. 3 (London: Holland Press, 1963), 189.
[17] Bagwell, 190.

1688 they found the gates closed against them. This action was viewed as rebellion and dealt with as such. They called for reinforcements and settled in for a long siege. After 105 days, 'the last great siege in British history'[18] ended with the fall of Londonderry.[19] But it was not a decisive victory of James. Other significant battles were still being fought across Northern Ireland. The men from Enniskillen were major contributors to all of these battles. Enniskillen, in addition to Londonderry, was a major Protestant holdout in the north. The townsmen and others from the countryside banded together to resist James's soldiers and earned a reputation as potent fighters. Soon they were travelling to other towns to aid in their defenses and generally harassing James's army. When the Enniskilleners won at the battle of Newtownbutler, the tide of the war turned. The Jacobites lost Ulster forever and William earned a secure place to land and a strong base for his operations in Ireland.[20]

Political maneuvers were being carried out in the south at the same time as the military wrangling in the north. When James arrived in Dublin, he wasted no time calling a Parliament. He desperately needed money and support from Ireland and the best way to get it was through the legal process of calling an assembly and passing legislation for funds. Williamite historians say that the Parliament was not legal because James was no longer King, but the Irish of the times clearly did not see it that way. And the all Catholic Parliament did comply to Poyning's law, which stipulated that all legislation be approved by Parliament or the King. With the king right in Dublin, approval was not a problem. One of the first acts ratified by the Patriot Parliament stated 'that none, save the King and

---

[18] Jonathan Bardon, A Shorter Illustrated History of Ulster (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1996), 86.
[19] For an excellent explanation of siege warfare, see Richard Doherty, The Williamite War in Ireland 1688-1691 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 224-227.
[20] Simms, War and Politics, 144.

Parliament of Ireland, could make laws to bind Ireland'.[21] Once they established that their first loyalty was to Ireland, they passed the acts that James was pushing for. The first of these was the Act of Supply for his Majesty for the Support of his Army. The Act granted King James £20,000 a month toward the cost of supporting the army. The money was raised from a tax on the land, based on the ability of the landowners or renters to pay the tax.[22] The English Parliament had never acted so fairly, and because the Irish Parliament had, the people did not object to the new tax. Over the course of the year the Patriot Parliament passed a total of thirty-five acts. However, they were the last Catholic Parliament to meet in Ireland until 1920. If things had turned out better for James that certainly would not have been the case.

As it was, the situation looked grim for the dethroned King of England. The majority of his soldiers were poorly trained and even more poorly armed. He pleaded with Louis XIV for reinforcements and he finally agreed to an exchange of two French soldiers for every Irish soldier that was sent to France. In all, 8,000 French soldiers were sent to Ireland under the command of the Count of Lauzun. Unfortunately, he was more of a 'drawing-room soldier, who shone more at Versailles than on the battle-field'.[23] Tyrconnel had also dismissed most of the other commander officers from the army, because they were Protestants. Good leadership was significantly deficient, but the Jacobites lacked common soldiers as well. William's combined English and Dutch forces, composed of cavalry, dragoons, infantry and guards, far outnumbered them.

---

[21] Thomas Davis, The Patriot Parliament of 1689 3rd ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), xciii.
[22] Davis, 49.
[23] Reverend E. Hale, The Fall of the Stuarts and Western Europe (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 182.

Contemporary observers stated that William commanded a force of approximately 36,000 while James could muster only 26,000.[24]

Considering that James was outnumbered, he chose a very poor position from which to launch his attack on William. According to Charles O'Kelly, a colonel in James's army, the king 'encamped upon the Leinster side of the river Boyne, which anciently divided that province from Ulster. It was fordable in several places, and no trench was cast up for the defence (sic) of those fords. William no sooner arrived than he pitched his camp on the Ulster side of the same river'.[25] Both armies commenced to shell each other with their artillery. As William rode on horseback, observing James's position, he was hit in the shoulder. Unfortunately, he was not seriously injured and the next day led the attack against the Jacobites.

The key to William's success at the Boyne was his flanking maneuvers. Early on the morning of July 1st, William sent about a third of his troops west to find a crossing further upstream. James wrongly assumed that that group was the majority of William's forces and sent about two-thirds of his army to counter them. The Jacobites soon realized their mistake when the remaining two-thirds of William's army attacked them from directly across the river. The Irish cavalry charged the river repeatedly in order to stop the advance of the English infantry, but it was of no use. There were too many soldiers for the small cavalry to manage. Suddenly, William and a small troop of mounted men appeared in the east. They had split off from the main body and crossed the Boyne at an unprotected ford downstream. 'The Jacobites were now in danger of being trapped ...in

---

[24] John Gilbert, A Jacobite Narrative of the War in Ireland 1688-1691 (Shannon: Irish UP, 1971), 97.
[25] Charles O'Kelly, The Jacobite War in Ireland 1688-1691 2nd ed. (Dublin: Sealy Bryers & Walker, 1894), 19.

the bend of the river by forces approaching from the centre, left and right'.[26] The only way out of their position was one narrow road through a marsh. James and a select group of guards escaped to Dublin and the rest of the army followed in good order. All told, approximately 1,000 Irishmen died that day. By the time the Williamites reached Dublin the following day, James had sailed for France.

It certainly seems that James abandoned his army at the first sign of difficulty. But his military record as a young man in France and his deeds while Admiral of the Fleet during his bother's reign do not pronounce him a coward. Colonel O'Kelly offered a surprising explanation for James's hasty departure. He argued that the King believed his troops were completely defeated and beyond his help. He goes on to say that it was right of James to go to France, where he would be safe and able to mount another force against William the next year. In the meantime, the remnants of the Irish army ensconced themselves in the city of Limerick in western Ireland and waited for William to make his next move.

William's only solution was a siege, because the Irish were determined to hold out for as long as possible. He wanted to wrap things up quickly in Ireland because his lands in Holland were being threatened and he needed his troops there. After a respectable siege and a week's worth of negotiation the Treaty of Limerick was signed on 3 October 1691. In light of the persistent opposition the Irish gave William, he gave them a fair treaty. The first civil article in the treaty 'guaranteed the enjoyment of such privileges in the exercise of religion as were consistent with the laws of Ireland or were enjoyed in the reign of Charles II, and promised further protection from disturbance on

---

[26] Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery, eds. A Military History of Ireland (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 201.

account of religion'.[27] The military articles were equally liberal. Any soldier who wished to leave Ireland was given transport to France and accepted by the Irish brigade there. Their land was confiscated, but only theirs. Any combatants who wished to stay in Ireland were allowed to do so with no repercussions. 'With the departure of the Irish soldiers the last vestige of opposition to the House of Orange disappeared'.[28]

Perhaps the Irish soldiers left their homeland too soon. Many Protestants were not happy with the liberal terms of the treaty and quickly began to undermine the guarantees of life, liberty, property and religion. The institution of the penal laws allowed them to subjugate the Catholics more than ever before and marked the beginning of the Protestant Ascendancy.

'The purpose of the penal laws was to ensure the Protestant ascendancy by destroying or debasing the Catholic upper classes rather than by eliminating Catholicism'.[29] The first penal law appeared just three years after the Treaty of Limerick was signed. It was called the Act for the Better Securing of the Government Against Papists and it stated that Catholics could not have weapons of any kind. Furthermore, magistrates were authorized to search any Irish Catholic's house at anytime of the day or night with no prior warning. If weapons were found, the owner of the house could be punished with a fine, imprisonment, time in the pillory or a public whipping. Shortly after this, in 1697, the Act for Banishing All Papists Exercising Any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Regulars of the Popish Clergy Out of this Kingdom was passed. As the title suggests, all Catholic clergy were required to leave Ireland and they had to be out by May 1, 1698.

---

[27] William Burke, The Irish Priest in the Penal Times (Shannon: Irish UP, 1969), 112.
[28] Hale, 198. For a complete listing of the civil articles, see Simms, War and Politics, 219.
[29] Francis Godwin James, Ireland in the Empire 1688-1770 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1973), 22.

If any clergy were found in Ireland after that they were transported across the seas to various penal colonies. Any priest who returned to Ireland after being transported risked a traitor's death of hanging, drawing and quartering.

But the Protestants were not content to stop with those stringent measures. Laws were passed in the following years that kept Catholics from: exercising their religion, receiving a Catholic education, sending their children abroad to be educated as Catholics, entering any profession or holding public office, engaging in trade or commerce, owning a horse worth more than £5, buying or leasing land, renting land worth more than 30 shillings, voting, and receiving a gift or inheritance from a Protestant. On top of all this, Catholics were fined if they did not attend Protestant church services.[30] So much for the protection promised them in the treaty. But that is often the way of things. The victors make the rules, and then change them as soon as it is convenient. But what if the Irish had been the victors?

It is understood that an Irish win at the Boyne would have changed the course of history. But what would have had to change to enable them to win? Perhaps the thing that was most detrimental to their cause was their own attitudes. Though almost every Irishman had a reason to oppose William and the Protestants, there was a remarkable lack of unity at all levels of the army. 'Ireland's failure to achieve unity...must be considered the primary reason for its eventual conquest'.[31] Even the leaders had a hard time putting their differences aside and working together. In particular, Lord Tyrconnel and Patrick

---

[30] "Irish Culture and History: The Penal Laws." Clans of Ireland Ltd. Based on an article by Brian Workman, May 2000. 4 May 2003 http://www.irishclans.com/articles/penallaws.html

[31] James, 5.

Sarsfield, the cavalry commander, often butted heads. As a result, morale was not as high as it should have been. At times the Irish were enthusiastic, but they were never very well trained. Tyrconnel's dismissal of all Protestants from the Irish army left a gap in the chain of command that was hard to fill.

James tried to remedy this particular problem by sending some of his poorer soldiers to France and exchanging them, for what he thought were better troops and leaders, but he was disappointed with his returns. The French commanders were no better than his own, and were perhaps worse, because they had no personal interest in the conflict. Louis XIV also sent money, weapons, and ammunition, and allowed James the use of his naval fleet. In spite of all this, England still had more resources to put toward the war, and France was not willing to go into debt for Ireland. But if the French had stepped up their commitment and sent more supplies it would have been enough to shift the balance in favor of Ireland.

Though Irish troops lacked good leadership and were often armed with little more than iron-tipped stakes, the main reason for their defeat at the Boyne was poor planning. James had picked a spot that was almost impossible to defend effectively. The river was not deep or swift enough to provide a sufficient barrier and had too many fords for James's small force to cover. James picked this awful position because he believed one of the greatest fallacies of modern war far; the capitol must be protected at all costs. His generals tried to persuade him to burn the city and move behind the river Shannon, but he would not hear of it. As a result, William swept across the Boyne and into Dublin. James retreated to France and his army finally did retreat across the Shannon, were they held out for another year.

It could be argued that the defeat of James II by William III was not of great significance. The Jacobite army survived to fight another day and William gained no real advantage by crossing the Boyne. So why is the battle so ingrained in the popular memory of Ireland? Because to the Protestants it was a symbolic victory: the day 'when William of Orange, and our immortal forefathers, overthrew the Pope and Popery at the Boyne'.[32] This idea would eventually blossom into the Orange Order, whose celebratory marches caused so many troubles in Ulster for so many decades. It is also the root of the Protestants' arrogance, which would cause problems for all of Catholic Ireland in the years following.

But what would an Irish victory have changed? Many very significant things, if one considers the ramifications of the treaty and its role in the Protestant ascendancy. Most importantly there would have been no penal codes. The penal codes were the start of the Irish poverty that was so appalling in the pre-famine and famine era. By limiting the opportunities for advancement and effectively crippling the Irish economy, the Protestant created the situation presented in Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal. A vast majority of the population was dependent on begging for survival and they were still having children that they could not support. In his pamphlet Swift designed a plan to lift the burden of the poor, by putting their children to good use. That good use, however, involved killing the children and sending them to England as delicate edibles or using their skin to 'make admirable *Gloves for Ladies*, and *Summer Boots for fine Gentlemen*'.[33] Of course this was a ludicrous solution, but later in the work Swift

---

[32] Peter Berresford Ellis, The Boyne Water (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), xi.
[33] Jonathan Swift, Swift's Irish Pamphlets Ed. Joseph McMinn (Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble Books, 1991), 146.

suggested a more agreeable alternative. He called for the people of Ireland to unite, use goods manufactured in their own country, shun foreign luxuries, teach the landlords to respect the tenants, level a fine against absentee landlords and most importantly, to instill a love of country and 'a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill' in all the people.[34] All of these things were needed to improve Ireland, but none of them happened until well into the future.

But what about the big picture? Who would wear the three crowns of England, Ireland and Scotland if James had won at the Boyne? Quite frankly, no one man. If James had won a decisive victory at the Boyne, he would have controlled all of Ireland. A win there would have motivated his army to continue the fight and it would have motivated Louis XIV to send additional and much needed supplies. After a long struggle to suppress the Protestant north, James would have made a move against Scotland. Though Ireland and Scotland favored different religions, there was no love loss between Scotland and England. They would have been happy to support James if it meant independence from England. From there James would have made his move against England. But there is very little chance that he could have taken it. William and the Protestant aristocracy would never allow themselves to be displaced and they had more funds available than James could ever hope for. After a long, hard fight, James would ultimately confront defeat. But at least the highly respected poets of Ireland would not have memorialized him as a 'cowardly shite'.[35]

As for William, a defeat at the Boyne would mean a long struggle to keep his stolen throne. Not only would James threaten him externally, but he would also be

---

[34] Swift, 149.
[35] Éamonn Ó Ciardha, Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685-1766 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 53.

troubled internally. He was not popular with the commoners to begin with, and a long war would have made him even less endearing. The people's dislike would prompt them to support the Parliament, who would be working to undermine William's authority. Eventually he would have become little more than a figurehead for a parliamentary system of government. In addition, all the distractions of a war would prevent him from adequately defending his lands in Holland, which would probably be taken by Louis XIV.

At first glance, the Battle of the Boyne seems insignificant. A minor defeat early in the war, leaving both armies able to fight another day. But upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the Boyne was a turning point. The Irish were demoralized and their king was in retreat. Soon foreign aid was withdrawn and they found themselves cornered by a hostile force. For the Protestants with was a moral victory as well as a military one. They would commemorate their victory over the Papists every year, in the most inflammatory fashions. These commemorations would cement the hatred between the Protestants and Catholics and would eventually split Ireland in two.

The defeat of the Irish also started the Protestant ascendancy, a 200 year long subjugation of Irish Catholic culture, religion and freedom. Eventually the Irish would rise again to throw off the yoke of England and they would call to memory Tyrconnel, Sarsfield and other heroes of the Boyne. If one battle can have such a consequences, it cannot be meaningless. The Battle of the Boyne was the final pitched battle on Irish soil, but it was the primary cause of Ireland's modern form.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bartlett, Thomas and D.W. Hayton, ed. Penal Era and Golden Age: Essays in Irish History, 1690-1800. Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1979.

Burke, William P. The Irish Priests in the Penal Times 1660-1760. Shannon: Irish UP, 1969.

Davis, Thomas. The Patriot Parliament of 1689. 3rd ed. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893.

Ellis, Peter Berresford. The Boyne Water London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976.

Gilbert, John T., ed. A Jacobite Narrative of the War in Ireland, 1688-1691. 1892. Shannon: Irish UP, 1971.

O'Ciardha, Eamonn. Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685-1766. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002.

O'Kelly, Charles. The Jacobite War in Ireland, 1688-1691. 2nd ed. Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1894.

Simms, John Gerald. War and Politics in Ireland, 1649-1730. London: The Hambledon Press, 1986.

Swift, Jonathan. Swift's Irish Pamphlets. Ed. Joseph McMinn. Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble Books, 1991.

Secondary Sources

Bagwell, Richard. Ireland Under the Stuarts.1909. 3 vols. London: Holland Press, 1963.

Bardon, Jonathan. A Shorter Illustrated History of Ulster. Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1996.

Bartlett, Thomas and Keith Jeffery, ed. A Military History of Ireland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Bartlett, Thomas. The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830. Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble, 1992.

Brady, John and Patrick J. Corish. The Church Under the Penal Code. A History of Irish Catholicism Series. 4. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1971.

Cronin, Mike. History of Ireland. New York: Palgrave, 2001

Doherty, Richard. The Williamite War in Ireland, 1688-1691. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998.

Hale, Reverend. The Fall of the Stuarts and Western Europe from 1678-1697. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887.

Horwitz, Henry. Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1977.

"Irish History and Culture: The Penal Laws." Clans of Ireland Ltd. Based on an article by Brian Workman, May 2000. 4 May 2003 http://www.irishclans.com/articles/penallaws.html

James, Francis Godwin. Ireland in the Empire 1688-1770. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1973.

Lane, Jane. King James the Last. London: Andrew Dakers Ltd.,1942.

MacCurtain, Margaret. Tudor and Stuart Ireland. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1972.

Miller, John. The Life and Times of William and Mary. London: Book Club Associates, 1974.

Moody, T.W and F.X. Martin. The Course of Irish History. 4th ed. Lanham: Robert Rinehart Publishers, 2000.

Simms, John Gerald. Jacobite Ireland, 1685-1691. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000.

Simms, John Gerald. The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland 1690-1703. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1956.