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A Contemporary Letter Descriptive of Military Operations in County Louth in 1689

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A contemporary Letter descriptive of Military Operations in County Louth in 1689.

THE original of the following letter appears in a volume of MSS. in the British Museum, press-marked. "Additional, 5540." It is subscribed with the writer's initials only and these are uncertain, but they may possibly be (and they most resemble) the letters "F.H." It is endorsed "To Mr John Cary, Merch^t In Grace R^d Bristoll." The edge of the sheet of paper on which it is written is cut into at the right-hand side, and from one to three letters in each line are almost invariably missing. With two exceptions, which are indicated here by the insertion of a pair of square brackets, these excisions are obvious. The letter is not merely closely corroborative of the extracts from Colonel Bellingham's Diary, so ably edited for the last number of the *Journal* by Mr. Joseph T. Dolan, but it gives some general idea of an eye-witness and a participator in the impending struggle of the feelings, the physical condition, and the equipment of the rival forces:—

DUNDALK 7 BER Y^e 23^d 1689.

Since y^e Surrender of Carack^s: on y^e 28 past on termes hon[ble] enough but not too strictly observed by us, haue little of moment till we came to this place. The army suffer[ed] much in there march by y^e weath^r: and want of bread, our provision[s] being sent by sea, and y^e country not only naturally bar[ren] but burnt up by y^e enemy. We arrived here on y^e 7^o In[st] without y^e least opposition of y^e enemy, for 7 dayes comeing here we had ill weather, and our ships no[t] comeing great scarcity of bread but plenty of flesh c[aused ?] our souldiers eat freely without bread and nothing [to] drink but water cast a great many into fluxes, w[e] haue down about 100. In one Regiment with anothe[r] through y^e army. On y^e 15 Ins^t we had an acc^o broug[ht] us yt y^e enemy y^e late king being at y^e head of them were came from Droghada to Ardee within 6 mil[es] of our camp a little surprise to us not expecting such a peece of bravery from y^m: On y^e 17 Ins^t y^e a[d]vanced and incamped within 3 miles of us on whi[ch] y^e Genrall marched y^e Ducth Reg^t of guards and a Re[gt]

of Curiseers and placed them on y^e Dublin Road, [we] expected y^e would attacque us in our camp but the[y] gaue us leave to fortify all y^e passes leading to y^e to[wn] as also to make atrench round y^e town so y^t we feared no attacque from y^m yet on Saturday last a body of 10,000 men hors and foot came on a hi[ll] within $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile of our lesser campe, who expect'd an attacque yet after Strutting an hour or two they wi[th] drew yet once so near y^t our men kiled 3 of them King James is at y^e head of y^m computed to be ab[out] 30,000 in armes besides a great many straglers an[d] rabble with cithes and halph pikes. Yesterday they lay still and to day they burnt up all the forage b[e]tween y^m and us. Our forage is scarce and w^t w[e] haue we fecth 7 or 8 miles our army consists of 2 [] Regiment 7 of hors and 2 of dragoones Includeing Kirke[']s 3 Regiment and Iniskillen men our men are ve[ry] hearty and very desirous to fight y^m our Genrall will stay till reinforced with more hors. Y^e whole Island will not be reduced so soon as y^a and I thought.

7 ber y^e 28 we had good news. Coll Loyd was command[ed] to Sligo with a pty of hors and foot to fecure y^e town guns w^{ch} he did, on w^{ch} y^e Irish went with 600 ho[rs] and foot to force him to retire, but he hearing o[f] It Drew out 500 foot 2 troopes of hors & 3 of dragoo[ns] and met y^m y^e came furiously on him & h[e] rec'd. their Shot till he came within pistoll shot an[d] yⁿ discharged and kiled about 200 on which they fled Our horf took a compass and met ym in boyle where the killed 300 more and tooke severall horf and officers: y^r was burnfires and great rejoyce in our camp for this.

Yo^r

[]

O'Callaghan, in his valuable and voluminous notes to his edition of O'Kelly's *Macariæ Excidium* (Dublin, 1850), does not mention the above letter, and it is now contributed with the view that it may be considered an interesting supplement to the extracts from the Bellingham Diary that have been published in this *Journal*.

JAMES BUCKLEY.