

## A Spotlight on Irish History:

### THE BATTLE OF BENBURB.

On June 5, 1646, the Irish scored one of their greatest triumphs over the invading English hoards. It was a battle which stands as a masterpiece in military strategy in the annals of history.

Eoghan Ruadh O'Neil was the leader of the 5,000 Irishmen who opposed the English forces, commanded by General Monroe, of 6,000 troops and field artillery. The British commander assumed a position on the angle formed by the delta of two converging rivers, Oonah and Blackwater. With five divisions on the front line and four as secondary support, Monroe was attacking only four front line divisions of only.

Monroe awaited the attack holding all the advantages in his favor. The two rivers flowing together protected his flanks and rear, the bright sun rising in the east emblazoned Eoghan Ruadh's eyes and English reinforcements were approaching from the north.

O'Neill, however, refused a frontal attack at this time and sent his cavalry on a wide flanking movement to intercept and destroy the expected English assistance and to instigate skirmishes keeping the British in a constant state of unrest. As the day wore on, with O'Neill's cavalry returning from their successful venture, Monroe's army, facing the setting sun, tired of the day's harassment, was in the process of reorganizing. It was then that the war cry of O'Neill echoed on the fields and the whirlwind attack of his Irish

freedom fighters commenced.

The cavalry, sweeping past the English lines, captured the heavy guns while the infantry reduced the enemy defense to complete submission. In one short the pride of the English forces in Ulster had been defeated.

3,300 British soldiers lay dead on the battlefield while many more were killed in the rivers attempting retreat. 1,500 horse, two months provisions, the field of artillery and 32 British officers were captured.

The most astonishing and significant characteristic of the battle was that Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill's losses were 70 dead and 100 wounded.

The battle has been preserved in Irish literature through the poetic verse of Seamus McManus, who wrote:

"Ho! proud and haughty Sassenach,  
look to your powder now!  
Look to your spoils, O robber!  
for sore need you have, I trow;  
Look to your live ye sleuth hounds  
false! for naught shall us  
withstand,  
Since Eoghan Ruadh, our own be-  
loved, with vengeance is at  
hand."

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