

THE MONMOUTH REBELLION AND THE  
BATTLE OF SEDGEMOOR. — LANDING OF  
MONMOUTH — ENTHUSIASM OF HIS  
FOLLOWERS — HIS TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO  
TAUNTON — PROCLAIMED KING ON THE  
CORNHILL, BRIDGWATER — PREPARATIONS  
FOR BATTLE — THE MIDNIGHT ATTACK —  
DETAILS OF THE FIGHT — DEFEAT AND  
FLIGHT OF MONMOUTH — SWAYNE'S JUMPS  
— THE LEGEND OF THE SWORD — EXECUTION  
OF MONMOUTH.

From Holland o'er the troubled wave  
The gentle Monmouth came,  
To find, alas, a traitor's grave,  
And win a traitor's fame. — Burrington.

WE have now come to a most interesting period in the history of the neighbourhood, when the last battle fought on English ground took place. On the detection of what is known in history as the "*Rye-house plot*" (a design to murder King Charles II. on his return from Newmarket Races, but which was frustrated) the conspirators fled to Holland. Among them was the Duke of Monmouth, a presumably natural son of Charles II. by Lucy Waters, but who was in reality supposed to be the son of Colonel Robert Sidney, who boasted that the lady in question was *eniente* when she passed from his protection to that of Prince Charles. He was accompanied into Holland by the Earl of Argyle (known to his clansmen as Mac Callum More), the son of the Marquis of Argyle, who was executed in 1661 for having taken part with Cromwell against Charles I. A conspiracy arose, and it was decided that an invasion of England should be attempted, with a view to wrest the Crown from James II., who had just succeeded his brother. The intention was to place the succession with the Duke of Monmouth, and arrangements were made for the Duke of Argyle to descend on Scotland, Monmouth in the meantime to land in England.

Accordingly, in May, 1685, Argyle landed on Cantire, but scarcely two thousand claymores mustered at the call of the "*fiery cross*." He marched towards Glasgow, but his little army was scattered, he was taken prisoner, and towards the end of June lost his head. About this time Monmouth, with three ships, approached the coast of Dorsetshire, and landed at Lyme Regis. It is stated that his first act was to kneel down on the shore, and return thanks to God for "*having preserved the friends of liberty and pure religion, from the perils of the sea*." As soon as it was known under

what leader and for what purpose the expedition came, the enthusiasm of the populace burst through all restraints. The little town was in an uproar, and men running to and fro and shouting, "*A Monmouth! A Monmouth! The Protestant religion!*" In a manifesto (evidently written by the crafty Ferguson, of Letterpen, the Puritan preacher) the Duke "*desired to be considered only as the Captain-General of the English Protestants who were in arms against tyranny and Popery*."

Ploughmen and miners flocked in hundreds to join him; farmers came on their heavy cart-horses to fill the ranks of his rude cavalry, but it was significant that the nobles of England made no movement in his favour. His hopes rose high as his forces daily gathered strength. They came to his standard in crowds, and all the clerks whom he could employ were too few to take down the names of the recruits. By the time he had been 21 hours on English ground he was at the head of 1,500 men. A force of militia collected at Bridport to oppose him, and a confused and undecisive action took place, such as might have been expected when two bands of ploughmen, officered by country gentlemen and barristers, were opposed to each other. Monmouth's men at first drove the militia before them, but afterwards were obliged to retreat in confusion. Still recruits came in by the hundreds, and arming and drilling went on day after day.

The news of the insurrection was carried to London, and the Duke of Albemarle, stationed at Exeter with 4,000 men, advanced to Axminster, but in consequence of the resolute front presented by Monmouth's army, and the disaffection shown in his own ranks, Albemarle thought it advisable to withdraw, his retreat soon becoming a rout. Monmouth marched toward Taunton, where he arrived on the 18th of June, a week after his landing in England. Meanwhile a bill of attainder against him was passed in the House of Commons, his "*declaration*" was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman, and a reward of £5,000 was offered for his apprehension.

Taunton in that day was an eminently prosperous place, and was a celebrated seat of the woollen manufacture, situated in a pleasant vale, rich with orchards and green pastures. In the great civil war it had, through all vicissitudes, adhered to the Parliament, though twice closely besieged, and had been throughout defended with heroic valour by

Robert Blake, afterwards the renowned admiral of the Commonwealth. The children of the men, who, forty years before, had manned the ramparts of Taunton against the Royalists, now welcomed Monmouth with transports of joy and affection. *"Every door and window was adorned with wreaths of flowers. No man appeared in the streets without wearing in his hat a green bough, the badge of the popular cause"* A band of 26 young girls, the daughters of the best families in the town, worked with their own fingers a richly-embroidered flag, enriched with emblems of royal dignity, and publicly presented it to him, at the same time asking his acceptance of a small but very valuable Bible. \* He accepted the former with thanks, and the latter with a show of reverence. *"I come,"* said he, *"to defend the truths contained in this book, and to seal them, if it must be so, with my blood."* Miss Mary Blake, who headed these girls, carrying a drawn sword, is said to have made a short speech, which much pleased the Duke.

Monmouth noticed with some concern that, notwithstanding the fact that his ranks were daily recruited by labourers, farmers, shopkeepers, apprentices, Dissenting ministers, &c., the higher classes held aloof. With the ostensible object of attracting men of rank and fortune to his standard, he allowed himself to be proclaimed on the 20th June, and was hailed by the appellation of *"King Monmouth."* Immediately afterwards he issued several proclamations, one of which set a price on the head of [King] Charles. A second declared the Parliament: then sitting an unlawful assembly, whilst a third forbade the people to pay taxes to the usurper. The class he had hoped to conciliate still held aloof. The opinion of the leading Whigs seems to have been that Monmouth's enterprise could not fail to end in some great disaster to the nation.

On the day following that on which Monmouth had assumed the regal title he marched from Taunton to Bridgwater, passing through North Petherton, then a large and important village. His spirits, it is said, were not high, though he was cheered by the plaudits of the devoted thousands who marched with him.

Arrived at Bridgwater —one of the few towns which still had some Whig magistrates—the Mayor and Aldermen came in their robes of office to the south gate to welcome the Duke, and marching in procession to the high cross on the Cornhill

proclaimed him King, amid intense excitement, which even the falling rain could not quench. His troops found excellent quarters, and were furnished with necessaries at little or no cost by the enthusiastic people of the town and neighbourhood. He took up his residence in the Castle, and his immediate followers were also well attended to. His army encamped in the Castle Field, to the number of about six thousand men, whilst hundreds of others were domiciled throughout the town, the hostelries being inconveniently crowded.

The neighbouring villages and towns poured forth further batches of recruits, but no arms could be found for the thousands who wished to enrol themselves. The Duke had brought with him from the Continent but a scant supply of pikes and muskets; and hundreds of his followers had no other weapons than ingenuity could devise, fashioned out of tools they used in husbandry or mining. Of these rude implements of war the most fashionable was made by fastening the blade of a scythe erect on a strong pole.\*\* In the south external wall of Chedzoy Church is a sand-stone, which is still pointed out to visitors as that on which the men of Chedzoy eagerly sharpened their scythes before they entered the ranks of the Duke. The marks are still plainly visible. The tithing men of the country round Bridgwater and Taunton received orders to search everywhere for scythes, and to bring all that could be found into the camp. It was found impossible, however, even with the help of these contrivances, to supply the demand, and great numbers had to be sent sorrowfully away.

The cavalry were about 1,000 in number, but most of them had only large colts, such as were then bred in great herds on the Somerset marshes for the purpose of supplying London with coach and cart horses, and were, therefore, quite unfit for any military purpose.

A collection was made for Monmouth in the town, to which the inhabitants of Bridgwater responded freely, and after a two days' rest the whole army left for Glastonbury, being harassed nearly the whole way by Churchill, with a small body of Royal horsemen. The next day Wells was reached, and afterwards Shepton Mallet, the object at first being to seize Bristol. It was found, however, that the King's forces were very numerous, and it was thought advisable to fall back, especially as an attacking party of

Horse Guards scattered two troops of the rebel horse at Keynsham.

After visiting Bath, Philip's Norton, Bradford and Frome, Monmouth conceived the idea of abandoning the cause, and escaping to the Continent, but one of his advisers strongly opposed the dastardly proposition, and implored the Duke to face every danger rather than requite with ingratitude and treachery the attachment of the Western peasantry. At this juncture a report reached the rebel camp that the rustics of the marshes near Axbridge had arisen in defence of the Protestant religion, had armed themselves with flails, pitchforks and bludgeons, and were assembling by thousands at Bridgwater. Monmouth thereupon gave up his intention of flight, and determined to return to Bridgwater and to strengthen himself with these new allies. The rebels accordingly proceeded to Wells, where they tore the lead from the roofs of the Cathedral to make bullets, and also wantonly defaced the ornaments of the building. Lord Grey with difficulty preserved the altar from the insults of some ruffians who wished to carouse around it, by taking his stand before it with his sword drawn.\*\*\*

On Thursday, July 2, Monmouth again entered Bridgwater in circumstances far less cheering than those in which he had entered the town the previous week. He was further dismayed at finding the reinforcements he expected there to be comparatively inconsiderable. The Royal forces were at no great distance, and at first he thought of fortifying the town, and engaged several hundred labourers to dig trenches and throw up mounds. Before the work had advanced any stage, however, he gave up the idea. Whilst in a state of hopeless indecision the King's forces came in sight. They consisted of about 2,500 regular troops, and of about 1,500 of the Wiltshire Militia. Early on Sunday morning, July 5, they left Somerton, and pitched their tents that day about three miles from Bridgwater, on the plain of Sedgmoor.

The approach of the Royal forces was first discovered by William Sparks, a farmer, of Chedzoy, who happened to be on the top of St. Mary's tower, Bridgwater, with a telescope.\*\*\*\* The news was at once conveyed to Monmouth, who, with Lord Grey, at once climbed up the narrow staircase on to the battlements and reconnoitred. "*Beneath him lay a fiat expanse, now rich with corn fields and apple trees, but then, as its name imports, for the most part a dreary morass. When the rains were*

*heavy and the Parret and its tributary streams rose above their banks, this tract was often flooded. It was indeed anciently part of that great swamp which is renowned in our early Chronicles as having arrested the progress of two successive races of invaders, which long protected the Celts against the aggressions of the Kings of Wessex, and which sheltered Alfred from the pursuits of the Danes. In these remote times the region could be traversed only in boats. It was a vast pool, wherein were scattered many islets of shifting and treacherous soil, overhung with rank jungle, and swarming with deer and wild swine. Even in the days of the Tudors the traveller whose journey lay from Manchester to Bridgwater was forced to make a circuit of several miles in order to avoid the waters. When Monmouth looked upon Sedgmoor it had been partially reclaimed by art, and was intersected by many deep and wide trenches called rhines. In the midst of the moor, rose, clustering round the towers of churches, a few villages, of which the names seem to indicate that they once were surrounded by waves. In one of these villages, called Westonzoyland, the Royal Cavalry lay, and Feversham had fixed his headquarters there. Many persons still living (1858) have seen the servant girl who waited on him that day at table; and a large dish of Persian ware, which was set before him, is still carefully preserved in the neighbourhood."*†

*"At Middlezoy the Wiltshire Militia were quartered, whilst on the open moor, not far from Chedzoy, there were encamped several battalions of regular infantry. Oldmixon, the Bridgwater chronicler of the Stuarts, tells us that Monmouth looked gloomily at these infantry. "I know those men," said he, "they will fight. If I had but them all would go well!"*

As will have been seen, the three divisions of the Royal army lay at some distance apart from one another, and there was an appearance of negligence and of relaxed discipline in all their movements; it being also reported that they were drinking themselves drunk with 'Zoyland cider. The incapacity of Feversham, who commanded, was also notorious, and the whole army thought only of eating and sleeping even at this momentous crisis.

Monmouth having observed the disposition of the Royal forces, and having been apprised of the state in which they were, conceived, after a consultation with his officers, that a night attack had most chance of success, preparations for which were instantly made.

It was Sunday, and his followers, who had, for the most part, been brought up after

the Puritan fashion, passed a great part of the day in religious exercises. The Castle Field, in which the army was encamped, presented a spectacle such as, since the disbanding of Cromwell's soldiers, England had never seen. The Dissenting preachers who had taken arms against Popery, and some of whom had probably fought in the great Civil War, prayed and preached in red coats and huge jack-boots, with swords by their sides. Ferguson was one of those who harangued. He took for his text the awful imprecation by which the Israelites who dwelt beyond Jordan cleared themselves of the charge ignorantly brought against them by their brethren on the other side of the river — "*The Lord God of Gods, the Lord God of Gods, he knoweth; and Israel he shall know. If it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, save us not this day.*"

It was made no secret in Bridgwater that an attack was to be made. The town was full, especially of women, who had repaired thither by hundreds from the surrounding towns and country to see their husbands, sons, brothers, and lovers once more. There were many sad partings that day, and many parted never to meet again. The report of the intended attack came to the ears of a young girl who was zealous for the King. Though of modest character, she had the courage to resolve that she would bear the intelligence to Feversham.

She stole out of Bridgwater and made her way to the Royal camp. But that camp was not a place where female innocence could be safe. One of the officers who had doubtless indulged in wine seized the unhappy maiden, refused to listen to her errand, and brutally outraged her. She fled in agonies of rage and shame, leaving the army to whatever fate might befall it. Bishop Kennet is the authority for the story of this disgraceful episode.

The elements were somewhat favourable for a night attack, but the marsh fog lay so thickly on Sedgemoor that no object could be discerned at a distance of fifty paces. At eleven o'clock the Duke and his body-guard rode out of the Castle. It is related that he was not of the frame of mind which befits one who is about to strike a decisive blow, but he appeared sad and full of evil augury. His army marched by a circuitous path, nearly six miles in length, towards the Royal encampment on Sedgemoor, part of which route was long known by the name of War Lane. Monmouth himself had led the foot,

and the horse were entrusted to Lord Grey. Orders had been given that strict silence should be observed, that no drum should be beaten, and no shot fired. The word by which the soldiers were to recognise each other in the darkness was "*Soho.*"

The open moor was reached about one o'clock on Monday morning, July 6. Between them and the enemy there lay three broad rhines or drainage ditches, filled with water and soft mud. They were named the Black Ditch, the Langmoor Rhine, and the Bussex Rhine. The latter covered the Royal encampment, but its existence seems to have been forgotten by the rebels. The horse and foot passed the Black Ditch by the causeway, but in the fog the guide missed his way across the Langmoor Rhine. This occasioned some delay, and when the causeway was discovered and the passage effected a pistol went off. This was the *avant courier* of the battle, for the following vivid description of which we are indebted to Macaulay's "*History of England*"

"Some men of the Horse Guards who were on watch heard the report of a pistol, and perceived that a great multitude were advancing through the mist. They fired their carbines, and galloped off in different directions to give the Alarm. Some hastened to Westonzoyland, where the cavalry lay. One trooper spurred to the encampment of the infantry, and cried vehemently that the enemy was at hand. The drums of Dumbarton's regiment beat to arms, and the men got fast into their ranks. It was time; for Monmouth was already drawing up his army for action. He ordered Grey to lead the way with his cavalry, and followed himself at the head of the infantry. Grey pushed on until his progress was unexpectedly arrested by the Bussex Rhine. On the opposite side of the ditch the King's Foot were hastily forming in order of battle.

"For whom are you?" called out an officer of the Foot Guards. "For the King," replied a voice from the ranks of the rebel cavalry. "For which King?" was then demanded. The answer was a shout of "King Monmouth!" mingled with the war-cry which forty years before had been inscribed on the colours of the Parliamentary regiments — "God with us." The Royal troops instantly fired such a volley of musketry as sent the rebel horse flying in all directions. The world agreed to ascribe this ignominious rout to Grey's pusillanimity. Yet it is by no means clear that Churchill would have succeeded better at the head of men who had never before handled arms on horseback, and whose horses were unused not only to stand fire, but to obey the rein.

*" A few minutes after the Duke's horse had dispersed themselves over the moor, his infantry came running fast, and guided through the gloom by the lighted matches of Dumbarton's regiment.*

*" Monmouth was startled by finding that a broad and profound trench lay between him and the camp which he hoped to surprise. The insurgents halted on the edge of the rhine and fired. Part of the Royal regiment on the opposite - bank returned the fire. During three quarters of an hour the roar of the musketry was incessant. The Somersetshire peasants behaved themselves as if they had been veteran soldiers, save only that they levelled their pieces too high.*

*" But now the other divisions of the Boyal Army were in motion. The Life Guards and Blues came pricking fast from Westonzoyland and scattered in an instant some of Grey's horse, who had attempted to rally. The fugitives had spread a panic among their comrades in the rear, who had charge of the ammunition. The waggoners drove off at full speed and never stopped till they were many miles from the field of battle. Monmouth had hitherto done his part like a stout and able warrior. He had been seen on foot, pike in hand, encouraging his infantry by voice and example. But he was too well acquainted with military affairs not to know that all was over. His men had lost the advantage which surprise and darkness had given them. They were deserted by horse and by ammunition waggons. The King's forces were now united and in good order. Feversham had been awakened by the firing, had got out of bed, had adjusted his cravat, had looked at himself well in the glass, and had come to see what his men were doing. Meanwhile, what was of much more importance, Churchill had rapidly made an entirely new disposition of the Royal infantry. The day was about to break. The event of a conflict on an open plain by broad daylight, could not be doubtful. Yet Monmouth should have felt that it was not for him to fly, while thousands whose affection for him had hurried to destruction were still manfully fighting in his cause. But vain hopes and the intense love of life prevailed. He saw that if he tarried the Royal cavalry would soon intercept his retreat. He mounted and rode from the field.*

*" Yet his foot though deserted, made a gallant stand. The Life Guards attacked them on the right, the Blues on the left; but the Somersetshire clowns, with their scythes and the butt ends of their muskets, faced the Royal horse like old soldiers. Oglethorpe made a vigorous attempt to break them, but was manfully repulsed. Sarsfield, a brave Irish officer, whose name afterwards obtained a melancholy celebrity, charged on the other flank. His men were beaten back. He was*

*himself struck to the ground, and lay for a time as one dead. But the struggle of the hardy rustics could not last. Their powder and ball was spent. Cries were heard of " Ammunition ! For God's sake, ammunition!" But no ammunition was at hand.*

*" And now the King's artillery came up. It had been posted half a mile off, on the high road from Westonzoyland to Bridgwater. So defective were then the appointments of an English army that there would have been much difficulty in dragging the great guns to the place where the battle was raging had not the Bishop of Winchester offered his coach-horses and traces for the purpose. Even when the guns had arrived there was such a want of gunners that a sergeant of Dumbarton's regiment was forced to take on himself the management of several pieces. The cannon, however, though ill-served, brought the engagement to a speedy close. The pikes of the rebel battalions began to shake, the ranks broke, the King's cavalry charged again, and bore down everything before them; the King's infantry came pouring across the ditch. Even in that extremity the Mendip miners stood bravely to their arms, and sold their lives dearly. But the rout was in a few minutes complete. Three hundred of the soldiers had been killed or wounded. Of the rebels more than a thousand lay dead on the moor.*

*" So ended the last fight, deserving the name of a battle, that has been fought on English ground. The impression left on the simple inhabitants of the neighbourhood was deep and lasting. That impression, indeed, has been frequently renewed, For even in our time the spade and the plough have not seldom turned up ghastly memorials of the slaughter, skulls and thigh-bones, and strange weapons made of implements of husbandry. Old peasants related very recently that in their childhood they were accustomed to play on the moor at the fight between King James and King Monmouth's men, and that King Monmouth's men always raised the cry of 'Soho.'"*

An extraordinary feature in the battle is that the rebels should have resisted so long. That five or six thousand farm labourers, ploughmen, and miners should contend during an hour with half that number of regular infantry and cavalry would now be thought a miracle. It may be pointed out, however, that the peasantry were accustomed to serve in the Militia, whilst the discipline of the regular army was also extremely lax.

A reference to the battle in Mr. B. D. Blackmore's popular novel, "*Lorna Doone*," may be read with interest :—

*" It was an awful thing, I say (and to this day I remember it), to hear the sounds of raging fight,*

*and the yells of raving slayers, and the howls of poor men stricken hard, and shattered from wrath to wailing; then suddenly the dead low hush, as of a soul departing and the spirits kneeling over it. Through the vapour of the earth, and the white breath of the water, and beneath the pale round moon (bowing as the drift went by), all this rush and pause of fear passed or lingered on my path.*

*“At last, when I almost despaired of escaping from this tangle of spongy banks, and of hazy creeks, and reed fringe, my horse heard the neigh of a fellow-horse, and was only too glad to answer it, upon which the other, having lost its rider,, came up and pricked his ears at us, and gazed through the fog very steadfastly. Therefore I encouraged him with a soft and genial whistle, and Kickums did his best to tempt him with a snort of inquiry. However, nothing would suit that nag except to enjoy his new freedom, and he capered away with his tail set on high and the stirrup irons clashing under him. Therefore, as he might know the way and appeared to have been in the battle, we followed him very carefully, and he led us to a little hamlet, called (as I found afterwards) West Zuyland or Zealand, so named, perhaps, from its situation amid this inland sea. Here the King’s troops had been quite lately, and their fires were still burning, but the men themselves had been summoned away by the night attack of the rebels. Hence I procured for my guide a young man who knew the district thoroughly, and who led me by many intricate ways to the rear of the rebel army. We came upon a broad, open moor, striped with sullen water courses, shagged with sedge and yellow iris, and the drier part with bilberries.*

*“ By this time it was four o’clock, and the summer sun, arising wanly, showed us all the ghastly scene. Would that I had never been there. Often in the lonely hours, even now it haunts me; would far more that the piteous thing had never been done in England. Flying men flung back from dreams of victory and honour, only glad to have the luck of life and the limbs to fly with, mud-bedraggled, foul with slime, reeking both with sweat and blood which they could not stop to wipe, cursing with their pumped-out lungs every stick that hindered them, or gory puddle that slipped their step, scarcely able to leap over the corpses that had dragged to die. And to see how the smiles lay; some as fair as death in sleep, with the smile of placid valour and of noble manhood hovering yet on the silent lips. These had bloodless hands put upwards as white as wax and firm as death, clasped (as on a monument) in prayer for dear ones left behind, or in high thanksgiving; And of these men there was nothing in their broad blue eyes to fear. But others were of different*

*sorts, simple fellows unused to pain, accustomed to the billhook, perhaps, or rasp of the knuckles in a quick-set hedge, or making some to-do at breakfast over a thumb cut in sharpening a scythe, and expecting their wives to make more to-do. Yet here lay these poor chaps, dead — dead after a deal of pain, with little mind to bear it, and a soul they had never thought of, gone, their God only knows whither, but to mercy we may trust.*

*“ Nearly all were scattered now. Of the noble country men, armed with scythe or pickaxe, blacksmiths’ hammers, or fold pitcher, who had stood their ground for hours against blazing musketry (from men whom they could not get at by reason of the water dyke), and then against the deadly cannon dragged by the Bishop’s horses to slaughter his own sheep: of these sturdy Englishmen, noble in their want of sense, scarce one out of four remained for the cowards to shoot down. ‘ Cross the rhaine!’ they shouted out, ‘Cross the rhaine, and come within rache!’ but the other mongrel Britons, with a mongrel at their head, found it pleasanter to shoot men who could not shoot in answer, than to meet the chance of mischief from strong arms and stronger hearts.*

*“ The last scene of this piteous play was acting just as I rode up. Broad daylight and upstanding sun, winnowing fog from the eastern hills and spreading the moor with freshness; all along the dykes they shone, glistened on the willow trunks,, and touched the banks with a hoary grey. But alas, those banks were touched more deeply with a gory red, and strewed with fallen trunks more woeful than the wreck of trees; while Rowling, cursing, yelling and loathsome reek of carnage drowned the scent of new mown hay and the carol of the lark. Then the cavalry of the King, with their horses at full speed, dashed from either side upon the helpless mob of countrymen. A few pikes feebly levelled met them, but they shot the pikemen, drew swords and helter skelter leaped into the scattered and scattering mass. Right and left they hacked and hewed; I could hear the snapping of scythes beneath them, and see the flash of their sweeping swords. How it must end was plain -enough even to one like myself, who had never, beheld such a battle before.”*

Shortly after four o’clock the routed army came pouring back into the streets of Bridgwater. The uproar, the blood, the gashes, the ghastly figures which sank down and never rose again, spread horror and dismay among the inhabitants, especially when it was found that the avenging conquerors were close behind. Those who had assisted the insurrectionists at first expected sack and massacre, but the conquerors contented themselves for the

most part with chasing the rebels. Before evening five hundred prisoners were crowded into the Parish Church of Westonzoyland. Eighty of them were wounded, and five expired within the consecrated walls. Large numbers of labourers were impressed for the purpose of burying the slain, whilst others were accorded the unenviable task of quartering the captives. The tithing-men of the neighbouring parishes were busied setting up gibbets and providing chains, and soon every road-side bore its ghastly burdens. As soon as the fight was decided the farmers of the neighbourhood hastened to send hogsheads of their best cider as peace offerings to the victors. The bells of Westonzoyland and Chedzoy were also rung, and the royal soldiers sang and rioted on the moor amidst the corpses.

One or two well-authenticated incidents, which occurred after the battle, may be recounted here. Among the prisoners selected for execution was a youth, who had held an ensign's commission under the Duke of Monmouth, who was locally famous as a runner, and hopes were held out to him that his life would be spared if he could run a race naked with one of the colts of the marsh. The young fellow had a halter tied round his neck and affixed to the horse, the latter being then started at full speed. For three-quarters of a mile (the boundary marks being even now pointed out) he kept up with the horse, which then fell exhausted, and naturally expected that his life would be spared, but as soon as the performance was over he was hurried to the gallows. For a number of years afterwards the natives of the neighbourhood were wont to tell, in connection with this story, of the "*White Lady*," who was long seen about the great grave near Brentford Bridge, where in common with others the young ensign was buried. She was the betrothed of this young soldier, and she ultimately died, bereft of reason, at Westonzoyland.

Another intended victim was more fortunate. His name was John Swayne, or Swain, a native of Shapwick, and he was, taken in bed the night after the battle by some of Colonel Kirke's dragoons, or as they were better known, "*Kirke's Lambs*." On the following morning, with others, he was marched on the road to Bridgwater, followed by his sobbing wife and children, and a number of the villagers. When he arrived at Loxley Wood he fell on his knees and

petitioned that the prayer of an unhappy father doomed to death might be heard, and that he might be allowed "*to show how far he could leap, that his children, when grown up, might keep him in remembrance.*" His prayer was granted by his captors, only too ready for a little relaxation, and the prisoner, being unfettered, took a run and three successive leaps, and before the soldiers had recovered from their astonishment, he had entered the adjoining coppice, which was so thickly wooded and full of swamps as to render it impossible for the horses to follow. He remained in the ditches of the neighbourhood until the time of slaughter was over, when he returned to the bosom of his family. Four stones now mark the place where Swayne jumped, and are naturally pointed out to visitors as objects of interest.

Another incident is that known as "*The Legend of the Sword.*" It appears that whilst Lord Feversham was entertaining himself with the execution of the prisoners, many of his officers returned to Weston, and without ceremony went into different houses and ordered refreshments. One of them, described as an ill-bred ruffian, went into the mansion of the Bridges, which had recently been the head-quarters of Lord Feversham, who, though not a welcome guest, had received all the attentions due to a stranger, by the laws of old English hospitality. The intruder found his way to the parlour, where the ladies were assembled (who had not recovered from the fright which the long-continued sounds of the great guns had occasioned), when the cowardly miscreant proceeded to offer a gross insult to the lady of the mansion, upon which her daughter, Mary (between 11 and 12 years of age), snatched his sword and stabbed him to the heart. She was brought before Colonel Kirke and tried by a courtmartial, when the young and interesting heroine was not only honourably acquitted but also received an order that the sword should be given to her, with the request that it should descend to the future Mary Bridges of the family. It is now in the possession of Mrs Dobree, of Wellington, Somerset.

In the parish chest in Westonzoyland there is a book containing the following interesting entry with regard to the battle, probably written by the then vicar:—

*"An account of the fight that was in Langmere, the 5th of July, 1685, between the King's Army and the Duke of Monmouth. The engagement began between one and two of the*

clock in the morning, and continued near one hour and a half. There was killed upon the spot of the King's soldiers 16; five of them buried in the church, the rest in the churchyard, and they all had Christian burial. 100 or more of the King's soldiers wounded, of which many died, which now have no contained account. There was killed of the rebels upon the spot about 300, hanged with us, 22, of which four were hanged in Gommarsch; about 500 prisoners brought into our church, of which there were 79 wounded, and five of them died of their wounds in our church. The D. of M. beheaded July 13th, A.D. 1685."

The figures given in this local chronology do not tally with those of the historians, but the paragraph is interesting as having been written at the time. There are one or two other entries in another parish book, which may here be quoted :

" Expended on the ringers 6th July, 1685, in remembrance of the great deliverance we had on that day, 7s."

" Expended upon the day of thanksgiving after the fight, upon the ringers, 11s 8d."

" Expended when Monmouth was taken, upon the ringers, 8s 6d. "

"Paid for frankincense, &c., to burn in the church after the prisoners had gone out, 5s 8d."

" Paid Ben Page and four others for ringing when the King was in the more, 1s 6d."

" Expended this in beere on the next day when the King came through Weston, 8s 10d."

The latter two entries refer to a visit of King James to the scene of the battle, on August 26, 1686.

Meanwhile Monmouth, accompanied by Grey and a few of his officers and friends, was flying from the field of battle, hotly pursued by the victors. At Chedzoy he stopped to mount a fresh horse, and he then hastened off with a view to reaching the Bristol Channel. From the rising ground on the north of the field of battle he saw the flash and the smoke of the last volley fired by his devoted but deserted followers. Before six o'clock he was twenty miles from Bridgwater. All England was on the alert, however; Grey was captured two days after the battle, and two days later Monmouth himself was discovered in a field near Ringwood, Hants, and was immediately taken to the Tower of London. During his short captivity he bore himself with but little fortitude, laid all blame on his advisers, and eagerly petitioned for a Royal pardon. When he was taken into his uncle's presence, he threw himself on the ground, and crawled to the king's feet,

begging for life at any price. The King sternly bade him have no hope, and the next day the unhappy Monmouth received the awful message from the King that nothing but his death could expiate the offence he had been guilty of. He submitted to his sad fate and when brought to the scaffold he conducted himself with a great firmness and intrepidity, and yielded his life to his implacable enemy. The executioner (Jack Ketch) either so feebly or unskilfully did his work that it was till after five successive blows he separated the head from the body. He fell in the 36th year of his age, " a man against whom all has been said by the most inveterate enemies both to him and his party, amounts to little more than this— that he had not a mind equal to the situation in which his ambition at different times engaged him to place himself."

A writer in *Notes and Queries* (Mr. Edward Mallan), under date February 9, 1884, draws attention to several curious words which occur in Roberts' " *Life of the Duke of Monmouth*." " The Duke marched from Bridgwater by the causeway, with Chedzoy on his right, down Bradney Lane to Peasy farm, with Bawdrripp at the foot of Polden Hill on his left. The rhines on North Moor were crossed by Steanings, old Bussex Rhine by Penzoy Pound, being close to Weston Zoyland, and Middlezoy being about two miles off. After the battle twenty-two prisoners were at once hanged, four of them in gemmaces (i.e., chains), from the branches of a large tree at Bussex."



\* This interesting flag is still extant, and was recently shown at Taunton in connection with some public event

\*\* Two or three of these rude though formidable weapons are still kept in the Tower of London

\*\*\* *London Gazette*, July 1, 1685.

\*\*\*\* A few years ago the glass that was claimed to be the one referred to was publicly exhibited in Bridgwater, and excited much curiosity.

† Macaulay's "History of England" Mr Stradling owned this dish at the time the historian saw it, but with many other relics of the Western Rebellion formerly kept at "Stradling's Folly," It was sold at Auction soon afterwards.