

Aubrey De Vere (1814-1902)

4 *A Ballad of Sarsfield; or, the Bursting of the Guns*

[This intercepting of De Ginkle's siege train on its way to Limerick is one of the most famous episodes in the career of the gallant Patrick Sarsfield.]

Sarsfield rode out, the Dutch to rout,
And to take and break their cannon;
To Mass went he at half-past three,
And at four he crossed the Shannon.

Tyrconnel slept. In dream his thoughts 5
Old fields of victory ran on;
And the chieftains of Thomond in Limerick's towers
Slept well by the banks of the Shannon.

He rode ten miles and he crossed the ford
And couch'd in the wood and waited; 10
Till, left and right on march'd in sight
That host which the true men hated.

"Charge!" Sarsfield cried; and the green hillside
As they charged replied in thunder;
They rode o'er the plain, and they rode o'er the slain, 15
And the rebel rout lay under!

He burn'd the gear the knaves held dear —
For his King he fought, not plunder;
With powder they cramm'd the guns, and ramm'd
Their mouths the red soil under 20

The spark flash'd out — like a nation's shout
The sound into heaven ascended;
The hosts of the sky made to earth reply,

And the thunders twain were blended!

Sarsfield rode out the Dutch to rout,

25

And to take and break their cannon;

A century after, Sarsfield's laughter

Was echoed from Dungannon.

(From *The Book of Irish Poetry*. Ed. with an Introduction by Alfred
Perceval Graves. Dublin: The Talbot Press, n. d.)